





*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

A CRUISE ACROSS EUROPE

ADVENTURES WITH A SKETCH BOOK

THE LAST CRUSADE, 1914—1918

A DWELLER IN MESOPOTAMIA

A PAINTER IN PALESTINE

UNKNOWN KENT

UNKNOWN SUSSEX

UNKNOWN ESSEX

*[In preparation]*

THE BODLEY HEAD





A ROAD THAT LEADS TO ROME



# UNKNOWN SURREY

## BY DONALD MAXWELL

Being a series of unmethodical Explorations of the  
County illustrated in line and colour by the Author



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## PREFACE

TO Men of Surrey who know their County well I must apologize for thrusting before them as "unknown" places and histories which they will find familiar enough. Lest, therefore, I should seem, as a Man of Kent, to have taken too readily the task of expounding Surrey, I might mention as an extenuating circumstance that I, too, am a Man of Surrey. I am qualified to be a Man of Kent by length of residence, and by the fact that my father, although a Scot, was born in Kent, but I am qualified to be a Man of Surrey also, because I myself was born in Surrey.

Like my other rambles after the unknown, there is neither rhyme nor reason in the arrangement of this book. To those who do not know Surrey I hope my perigrinations with a sketch book will serve as a good introduction to delightful country : to those who do, I shall be happy if I have captured for them fleeting sunsets and changing lights upon woodland and pine-clad heath, and thus added substance to their store of Surrey memories.

All the line sketches I have made rapidly and on the spot. I do not think I have sat down to any of them. The colour

notes, too, have been arrived at much in the same way, but in all cases I think it better to reproduce them without "working them up" too much. It is a story of quick travelling. He who runs may sketch.

My thanks are due to Mr. F. B. Palmer for kind permission to use some sketches of Rotherhithe that appeared in the *Treasury*; also to the Editors of *Country Life*, *The Bermondsey Book*, and the *Graphic* for similar favours.

DONALD MAXWELL.


THE BEACON,  
BORSTAL,  
ROCHESTER.

March 29, 1924.



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I  
RIVERS OF EDEN

B



In the Parish of Warlingham, as I have frequently heard, rises a Spring upon the approach of some remarkable alterations in Church or State. . . . It began to run a little before Christmas and ceased about the end of May, at that most glorious Æra of English Liberty, 1660. In 1665 it preceded the Plague in London, and the Revolution in 1688.—AUBREY (at Crowhurst).



## RIVERS OF EDEN

ONCE upon a time, to be exact it was less than two years ago, an artist might have been seen having breakfast at a most laudably early hour—laudable, that is to say, if a close imitation of the supposed habits of larks be accounted a virtue rather than a vice—in the Crown which is in Eden-bridge in the county of Kent. A close observer might have discerned upon his face an expression of high resolve and a stubbly growth of some twenty-two hours upon his chin.

Hard by the ancient hostelry where he sat, and crossed

by a bridge of stone some short distance down the irregularly built street, flowed the little River Eden. A mill and a tannery occupied its waters, waters that meandered from the west and, dividing into two streams and wandering in a level world of grass, caused that pleasing brimming effect of full-fed rivers "winding slow." A mile beyond this land of streams, and indeed a continuation of it, Kent led on to Surrey. To the north of the main channel of the Eden a tributary known as Kent Brook forms the boundary. More to the south, the swelling and wooded ridge of Dry Hill makes the corner of the county of Surrey, looking down alike upon Kent and Sussex meeting at its feet.

The remarkable thing about the landscape as viewed from the confines of Kent was this, that it looked very much the same as it usually did. This was no doubt because it did not know that an artist was going to write a book about it.

"Shall an artist write a book?" exclaims Mr. Hilaire Belloc, anticipating the difficulties of illustrating travels. "God forbid!"

I rather agree with him, but if I do not tell you the story of this artist's expeditions, then I shall have to find some one else, which will be very expensive and probably very dull. So here goes.

Surrey was still one mile distant when I dropped over a wall in the mill yard and struck out across fields in the direction of Dry Hill. I had great difficulty in finding a





A CORNER OF LINGFIELD



way, as the river seemed to divide into branches wherever I wanted to go. My map called the place Devil's Den, marked in Old English type to denote the historical, after the manner



NEAR DEVIL'S DEN.

of the Ordnance Survey, but I could not discover from two fishermen I encountered why it was so called. A man driving some cows, however, had "heard tell" that it was something to do with iron. If so, was the old type indicative of the antiquity of the ironworks or merely of the Devil? I knew we were in the iron country and that ironworks existed in this part of Kent and also over the border in Surrey, and I wondered.

*Lector*: My dear fellow, do pray moderate your dissertations on iron. Your Unknown Sussex was chock full of iron, and if you are going to fill up all Surrey with——

*Pictor*: I shall write about what I like, and if you don't like it, don't read it; and besides, I am in Kent still and haven't begun about Surrey yet. So don't cry out before you are hurt.

*Lector*: All right; but you needn't be rude about it.

*Pictor*: I am not rude; but I must be explicit. It is just as well to have a clear understanding and know where we are at the outset, or we shall have trouble further on.



Soon I crossed Kent Brook by means of an overhanging willow tree, as I could find no other way, and was in Unknown Surrey. The first sketch I made (facing this) shows the scene that opened out towards the hill at Haxted. The brook was very much in flood and the whole place was a series of lagoons and small lakes, which greatly added to the general picturesqueness of the scenery but made walking very difficult. Dry Hill seemed more than ever a desirable goal, and under the circumstances from which I was suffering I could see readily how it came by its name.

By means of a great deal of circumlocution I gained the rising ground at Haxted and found the mill which I have sketched on page 9. It is the first mill in Surrey on the system of the Eden streams. Beyond this point lies a well-wooded country leading on to distant hills. I suppose the last ridge of all with something upon it that looks like a tower is Leith Hill (page 3).

Then I turned and struck south in search of Starborough Castle, which I read was embattled and fortified by the first Lord Cobham of Sterburgh in 1342, and was of considerable strength and importance during the Civil War. Here Louis XII. of France was a captive for twenty years after the battle of Agincourt. Eleanor de Cobham married the Duke of Gloucester in the chapel here in 1427.

I do not remember having seen views of this castle in books on Surrey, and the map, as I have often found to my cost, does not make any distinction between a mere site of some historic place, which is hardly discernible in a field,

or a building like Westminster Abbey. But I was out to discover, and if I could find something like Dover Castle hidden among the trees, so much the better for this book.

For a few minutes hope ran high as I beheld a flagstaff



FLOODS AND KENT BROOK.

and the top of a tower, “bosom’d high in tufted trees,” but on nearer approach I could see that this was no ancient castle but a tower of rather new red brick. This tower rose from a large red-brick house which I could see now through an opening in the trees. The house looked so tremendously

respectable that I feared a mere artist looking for ruins might be received with scant sympathy.

This place, nevertheless, was named Starborough Castle, so I decided to present myself to the owner and find out what I could about it. These old places are generally owned by one of two types of people. Those who are very proud of their ancient historical property and are only too delighted to encourage artists to make pictures of it, or those who are rather bored by the shabby remains of other days in the midst of their practical world. These last are generally farmers, quite rightly concerned with what the place can turn out to-day rather than what it was yesterday. However, they regard artists and archæologists as mad but quite harmless, and do not mind them prowling about so long as they do not leave gates open.

There is a third type, but he is happily very rare. The furious owner with a dog ready to prove that the Englishman's house is his castle. I remember once, I will not name the place lest I be within danger of a libel action, asking a passer-by who owned a certain estate.

"Well," he said, as if it were a good joke, "it belongs to Mr. X." This statement did not enlighten me much, so I pursued my inquiries. "He will either shoot you or ask you to lunch," my informant said with a grim smile. He left me to think it out. I decided to risk it, and it is only fair to X to record the fact that I stayed to lunch.

Whoever lived in Starborough Castle, there was no evidence of hostility as I walked up the tree-bordered drive



towards a large house mostly of recent building, but it seemed added to some more venerable red-brick mansion. There was no castle. Although everything looked spick and span, I could see no gardeners and no evidence of inhabitants.



THE MILL AT HAXTED.

Then I was near enough to notice the absence of blinds. The house was empty.

I went round to the kitchens and stables, but they were deserted. Then I decided to make a tour of the gardens. There were goodly clusters of flowers and well-kept lawns. Across one of these was a sheet of water, and upon the farther

side thick masses of trees. The shape of these waters suggested a moat. This tree-covered island was evidently the site of the castle. There was just one glimpse of



THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF SURREY.

masonry and a castellated wall through the foliage. I have sketched both of these on page 11.

It was clear at a glance that this piece of building was a restoration, and by the style and the introduction of a

Gothic window that it belonged to the style in vogue in the eighteenth century. My doubts were soon set at rest by the one inhabitant and custodian of the gardens who emerged from a greenhouse. Opening up friendly relations I soon found out everything I wanted to know.

Starborough Castle, now known as Starborough Manor, was for sale. During the war it had been used as a school, sufficiently far away from the coast to be out of the



STARBOROUGH CASTLE:  
A FRAGMENT.



THE MOAT, STARBOROUGH CASTLE.

track of air-raids. A school from Thanet had been in possession. The tree-grown island, surrounded by the moat, was the site of the ancient castle, which had possessed four towers. These have disappeared save one, the one that had

been restored and made into a sort of summer-house. The remains of the castle have evidently been carried off as building material, for there are only a few foundation stones visible at the water's edge. My guide, who took me on to the island by means of a wooden bridge, told me that the bridge at Edenbridge is built of stones from this ruin. Afterwards I examined the masonry referred to and found that it is undoubtedly built of the same sort of stone as this restored tower in Starborough Castle, and that not a local product. I expect, therefore, this statement is borne out in fact.

The first Lord Cobham of Sterburgh was associated with the Earl of Warwick and Sir John Chandos as having especial charge of the Black Prince at Crécy. His effigy, referred to later in these notes, is in Lingfield Church. The second Lord Cobham distinguished himself by marrying his cousin, a breach of the canon law in those days, and he was a year seeking a dispensation from the Pope, a dispensation that was granted on condition of a severe penance. For four years the rash couple were enforced to be vegetarians and to abstain from wine on Wednesdays. Every day they had to provide four poor persons with bread, meat, fish, and a flagon of ale, and themselves had to wait upon them.

The eldest son of these delinquents founded Lingfield College, an important institution, but one of which all traces have disappeared to-day. The daughter of this founder married the Lord Protector, the Duke of Gloucester, and



DRY HILL. S.E. CORNER OF SURREY





appears in Shakespeare walking through the streets barefooted and in a white sheet.

Hall, the historian, records : “ Dame Elyanour Cobham, wife of the said duke, was accused of treason, for that she, by sorcery and enchantment, entended to destroy the Kyng, to the intent to aduance and to promote her husbände to the crowne ; upon thys she was examined in St. Stephen’s Chappel before the Bissshop of Canterbury ; and there by examination convict and judged to do open penance, in iii open places, within the city of London, and after that adjudged to perpetuall prisone in the Isle of Man, under the keepyng of Sir John Stanley, Knyght.”

From Starborough Castle to the summit of Dry Hill is a steady climb. The site of an ancient camp can be found at the top, the vallum running round the crown of the hill in a horseshoe shape pointing towards the south. A labourer told me that this is a Roman Camp. No doubt it is all written down somewhere, but I have not time to hunt it up now. Like most of these so-called Roman Camps on hills, it is probably a British Dun which was afterwards garrisoned by the Romans during their occupation of the country.

This was a fine vantage point, overlooking both Kent and Sussex, and I have sketched here, facing page 12, some aspect of the place from the tree-grown trench showing ridge upon ridge of rolling country. This time it is not “ green Sussex fading into blue,” but green Surrey fading into Sussex.

Keeping to a woodland path, I descended towards

Lingfield and secured on the way a delightful glimpse of Ford Manor backed by the blue goodness of Surrey.

The many streams that make up the system of the Eden valley were all in flood, and consequently I have given perhaps, literally, rather a fuller account of these rivers of Eden than drier circumstances would warrant. The weather had been the artist's gain, for every peddling river had become so proud that it had "overborne its continents."

While considering this valley of the little river Eden, it may be well to review the whole river system of Surrey, as in exploring the county a knowledge of the various valleys is a great help. Our old friend Kelly's Directory will serve as a text-book, but as it is somewhat cumbersome to transport from place to place, I will quote that part concerned with this subject.

"The shire belongs principally to the basin of the Thames and is watered by the Wandle, Putney Brook, and Blackwater; there are also some feeders of the Arun and Medway. The Wandle rises near Croydon, and at Beddington becomes an important mill-stream, one of the chief in the county, and famous for its trout; it is eleven miles long, falling into the Thames at Wandsworth. The Hogg's Mill rises near Ewell, falling in at Kingston. The Mole, anciently called the Emlay, rises in Sussex and enters the county near Horley, and winds through a beautiful valley, passing by Dorking, Leatherhead, and Cobham, to East Molesey, being forty-two miles long; it is sometimes soaked up by the porous soil near Box Hill so as to leave the channel dry,



FORD MANOR NEAR LINGFIELD





and thence becomes subterranean. It is nowhere navigable. The Wey is the most important river and rises near Alton, in Hampshire, flowing to Godalming, where it is made navigable, and is the principal feeder of the Basingstoke and the Wey and Arun Canals. It flows by Guildford and Woking, where it receives the Bourne brook—making a total course of forty-one miles.

“The Wey and Arun Canal, eighteen miles long, unites with the Wey at Stonebridge Wharf, but portions are disused and consequently there is no through traffic. The Basingstoke Canal begins near the mouth of the Wey, and runs thirty-seven miles to Basingstoke. The Grand Surrey Canal, cut from the Thames at Rotherhithe to Deptford, and thence to Camberwell, is very short, but of considerable importance, containing an extensive basin, in connection with the navigation of the Thames.”

I will quote also a condensed account of certain geological and other features of the shire.

“The highest point in the direct line of range to Botley Hill, above Titsey, 866 feet, but the highest point in the county, and, indeed, in this part of England, is Leith Hill, which is 966 feet, and is about three miles south of Dorking. The northern part of the county belongs to the London Clay formation, occasionally rising into hills 389 feet high, and dotted also with ranges of barren sand, called Bagshot sand, some of which are 463 feet high. Along the Thames is a rich belt of alluvial soil. The Downs belong to the Chalk formation. Along the south border a tract, called the Weald

of Surrey, unites with the Weald of Kent and Sussex in forming a flat and very extensive plain, occasionally broken by low hills. The north-west is the least inviting part of the county, consisting principally of heath and moorland waste. This portion of the county belongs entirely to the geological formation known by the name of Bagshot Sand. Immediately south and east of it a tract of nearly equal extent is occupied by London and plastic clay, which is succeeded on the south by the Chalk formation, of which the Downs above described are composed. The south part of the county belongs to the Wealden clay and iron-sand formation. Surrey produces clay, brick and potter's earth, white sand for glass, fuller's earth, firestone, Sussex and Purbeck marbles, chalk, lime, chert, flint, chalc-dony, jet, iron sand, and sulphate of barytes."

It was late afternoon



THE VILLAGE CAGE AT LINGFIELD.

when I reached Lingfield, a place which I had heard of only in connection with racing, but which presents many old-world objects of interest also. The corner by the church, which I have sketched here, and the old village cage are two of the "bits" most readily remembered. I do



A CORNER IN LINGFIELD.

not think the venerable appearance of this stone lock-up by the water can carry with it any stories of great romance. One might try to associate such a spot with a prisoner of Chillon or a man with an iron mask, but nothing more thrilling than village brawls and poaching affrays can be conjured up out of local history.

It is more than probable that its use as a "cage" was not its original one, and I should be quite prepared to hear that it was once a wayside chapel or shrine, and that the use of this building as a temporary prison is an opportunist one of late date.

Lingfield Church can boast of a rare relic of old England, a chained Bible. Another remarkable monument is the effigy of a Crusader trampling upon a Saracen with a green face. Mr. I. G. Waller sees in this a relic of crusading tradition. It has been argued that the "olive skins" of the Arabs may have been interpreted as green, and so the artist was trying to be particularly realistic. As the unfortunate soldan has a red beard by way of contrast, the colour scheme is startlingly unconventional.

Dr. J. Charles Cox, in his *English Church Fittings, Furniture and Accessories*, mentions two famous trees in this part of Surrey.

"At the west end of Tandridge is one of the finest in all England, but very seldom visited. It has a circumference of  $32\frac{1}{2}$  feet at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the ground; it is hollow, and spreads out into four main limbs at a height of 4 feet. Yet it is in full vigour, and has a spread of 80 feet from north to south. At Crowhurst, on the Kent border, is a more celebrated but much more mutilated churchyard yew. The hollow of the trunk was foolishly enlarged in 1820, when it was made to hold a round table capable of seating a dozen people; at the same time a doorway was fitted into the opening. This barbarously vulgarized tree is said to have a girth of  $32\frac{1}{2}$  feet, but this is partly artificial, it has been repaired with several large pieces of tin or iron."

Crowhurst Place, a sketch of which is reproduced further on, is an old Tudor mansion. On what authority it rests I do not know, but a local tradition asserts that



CROWHURST PLACE





Henry VIII. planted the old yew hedge. I cannot find much evidence of weight in Aubrey's account of Crowhurst, but he mentions a phenomenon which ought to be of great interest just now, if there is anything in omens. It is no less than a marvellous spring that bursts out on rare occasions—occasions foretelling great happenings in Church or State.

Now, as I am getting ready these sheets for publication, a Labour Government, the first in English History, is about to take office, and the papers are full of a conference at Malines between representatives of the English Church and of the Roman Pontiff.

I will not touch upon either of these portents except to note that this is just the time for a first-class bubbling up of the spring, if it is going to function again in the approved manner.

“ In a grove of Ew-Trees,” writes Aubrey, “ within the Manour of Westhall, in the Parish of Warlingham, as I have frequently heard, rises a spring upon the approach of some remarkable alteration in Church or State, which runs in a direct Course between Little Hills, to a place called Foxley Hatch, and there disappears, and is no more visible till it rises again at the End of Croydon Town, near Haling Pound ; where with great Rapidity it rushes into the River near the Church. I must not forget to observe, that the Part of this County where this rises and passes along, is so very dry that the Rusticks are oblig'd to drive their Cattle a great way for Water. It began to run a little before

Christmas, and ceased about the End of May at that most glorious Æra of English Liberty, 1660. In 1665 it preceded the Plague in London, and the Revolution in 1688."

I have not yet succeeded in finding any traces of this mysterious intermittent river. Perhaps the alterations in Church and State are not fundamental enough to make it work. Brown suggests that it is saving itself up for something terrific, such as England going dry or America becoming teetotal, when it will burst out like a gusher in the oilfields of Baku.



II

BLAZED TRAILS

A good road and a wise traveller are two different things.

*Old Proverb.*





## BLAZED TRAILS

**I**T is more difficult to find really lonely places in the countryside of Surrey than it is in Sussex. The comparative nearness of London, the excellence of roads, and the plentifulness of light cars are all things that make complete seclusion rare. The very delightfulness of Surrey has been its own undoing in some places. There are too many people per square mile.

I am not a motorist, and therefore I may be accused of gross selfishness if I put in a word for bad roads. In some places I should like to see the roads not made better, but

made much worse. Then there would still be places that could not be reached at all, if you were in a great hurry, and they would retain a certain out-of-the-world character. This would be as much to the interest of motorists who want to see the world as to any one else, for at present, in order to get to some really rural spot, a man has to drive so far. Now, in my Arcadian Utopia there would be certain places quite near London only to be approached on foot or by tracks negotiable by tanks or other adventurous forms of locomotion.

In a spirit of revolt at the extreme ease of modern travel in Surrey, Brown and I set out one day from Dorking. We scorned the offer of a taxi at the station, and looked in the other direction when we saw a motor omnibus in the offing. We determined to find our way by forest paths and the lesser-known lanes towards Leith Hill, the highest spot in Surrey. In order to do this Brown had carefully edited a sheet of the one-inch Ordnance Survey Map, and by means of ingenious rubrics had indicated what seemed to be a most romantic pathway by chasms and waterfalls, and all sorts of things which I never believed existed in the county of Surrey at all.

I do not know whether Brown is particularly inaccurate in map-reading or whether the survey of this part of England was undertaken in a spirit of levity and callous disregard of the feelings of unfortunate pedestrians. But I do know this, that when I hid the map, having basely pretended to have lost it, the hopeless geographical fog which seemed to

enshroud us lifted a little and we made far better progress. However, this is to anticipate the story, so I will stick to the narrative of our woodland path and begin again at Dorking.



THE TRACK TO FRIDAY STREET.

The first mile upon the Guildford road is not very interesting. There are a good many new houses, well-planned and cosy places too, some of them, and when the extreme newness has toned down will take their place very well in

the surrounding landscape. Behind us to the south-east lay another colony of new red-brick houses, backed by thickly wooded lumps of hill.

At the inn at Wotton, about three miles on the road, we turned down to the left, which road, according to Brown's rubrics, would lead us direct to Leith Hill. However, after about half a mile we came to a white gate and to a notice bearing a vague threat. It did not say, "All hope abandon ye who enter here," but it gave us to understand that the road was not a road, that it was strictly private, and that it led to Pinehurst. To the right of this was a turning which bore neither notice nor threat, nor indeed any information as to where it led. It looked quite a nice road although a very rough one, so we decided to take it for better or for worse.

This way soon became a mere track, and a very wild one

at that. After dipping down into a steep hollow it began climbing again, this time through a dense wood and between steep banks. Before long it had become more a tunnel than a woodland walk, and trees overarched it, thrusting out claw-like roots that seemed to grab

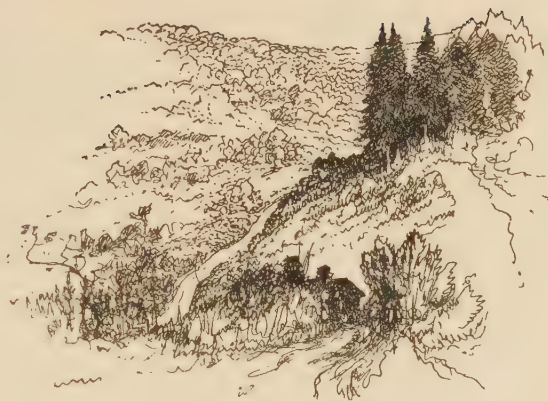


A MODERN COTTAGE  
NEAR HOLMBURY ST. MARY.



at our shoulders from above as we passed.

I should think this is a very old road, for it is worn down, either by centuries of traffic or by winter rains. So overgrown were these sandy cliffs,



A WOODLAND ROAD NEAR PINEHURST.

held together by a network of roots, that at times it was almost dark, though it was but early in the afternoon. It was a long climb, but at last we emerged into an open tract of heath. Brown knew exactly where we were, or he was able to prove so by mathematics and close reasoning. We were, without doubt, so Brown demonstrated, just at the entrance to the village of Holmbury St. Mary. In a few seconds we should see the church.

However, after some three-quarters of an hour of wandering about and crossing and recrossing paths and rough roads not apparent upon the map, even Brown began to think there must be something wrong with his cut-and-dried itinerary. It was at this stage that I hid the map, and working by the light of common sense instead of by Brown's wonderful invention we began to get on. At least we struck a path that by steep and picturesque descent through a



wood of pines led us out into a most delightful little Black Forest lake with a few houses clustered on its banks. It was Friday Street.

The name Friday Street is an intriguing one. Several places bear this title. There is a Friday Street in Kent, near Sutton Valence. There is one at Warnham in Sussex, and one at Ockley in Surrey. On looking up the matter in Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places* I find the following, which throws some light on the reason of the name :

“ We may, in the first place, arrive at some vague estimate of the relative mythological importance of the various Anglo-Saxon deities by means of a comparison of the number of places which severally bear their names, and which were probably dedicated to their worship. Judging by this standard, we conclude that Tiw, Frea, and Sætere had but a small hold on the religious affections of the people, for Tewesley in Surrey, Great Tew and Tew Dunse in Oxfordshire, Tewin in Hertfordshire, Dewerstone in Devon, Frathorpe and Fridaythorpe in Yorkshire, Fraisthorpe in Holderness, Fraesley in Warwickshire, three Friday Streets in Surrey and one in Suffolk, Satterleigh in Devon, and Satterthwaite in Lancashire seem to be the only places which bear their names.”

This little woodland hamlet is a curious mixture. At first sight you think you must be in the Black Forest or the Vosges, but a glimpse of the warm-looking, red-brick cottages, so uncompromisingly English, brings us back to Surrey again.



SUNSET ON HOLMBURY HILL.



About a mile further on—that is to say, following the woodland track in a southerly direction—we came to a delightful spot known as Abinger Bottom, where a spring bubbles out from the ground and runs merrily across our path, disappearing and appearing again and then gushing out in little waterfalls not a foot high, finally becoming a brook and hurrying down through the pines.

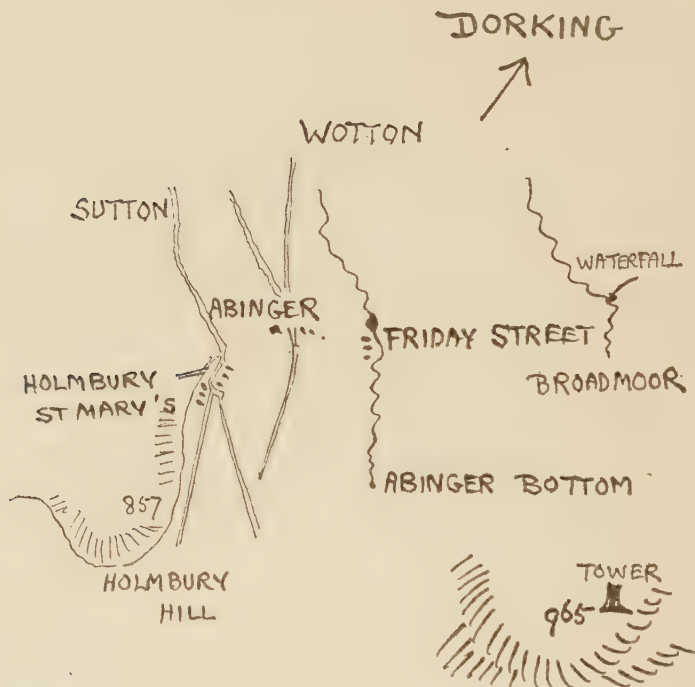
Altogether we were so unready to leave this secluded part of the world that we retraced our steps to Friday Street and opened up friendly relations with the inhabitants, finally arranging to stay at a cottage till the next day. Thus having settled the great problem of a roof over our heads, we gave ourselves up to the further exploring of the forest region.

We found Holmbury St. Mary, with its shingle-spired church among the trees, a scribbled sketch of which I have shown on page 31, a delightfully situated village hidden away between the hills.

I have shown another interesting feature on the road between Abinger and Holmbury, a timbered house, which struck me as soon as I saw it as both old and new at once. Somehow it didn't look as though it had been restored. While I made this quick sketch (page 26) Brown reconnoitred and found out something about it. It was both old *and* new, for it was constructed with the oak timbers of an old tithe barn in Sussex.

Holmbury has been much in the public eye of late, for it was on Holmbury Hill that the Admiralty sought to

erect buildings for a department far from electrical disturbances. The outcry in this part, however, called attention to the fact that there was no need to diminish



EWHURST

LEITH HILL

the wildness of the common land on Holmbury Hill when many other sites would do for the purpose. The protest was successful, and another piece of land has been



acquired in some private estate not very far from where we had been, Abinger Bottom. It will be so enshrouded in trees, however, that whatever is built will not much affect the woodland character of this valley.

What a tragic sidelight it is upon our boasted civilization that we should make a great outcry about new things! We assume, taught by bitter experience, that they will be hideous.

"Do you know," says some one, "they are going to build on Blank Hill?"

"How awful!" exclaims the world in general. "Couldn't it be stopped?"

Now imagine such a state of things a few centuries ago. There is a piece of land known as Blank Hill, wild and tree-covered.



HOLMBURY ST. MARY.

"Men will build upon it," says common report.

"A goodly scheme," cries all the world. "Fetch masons and carpenters and workers in iron and painters of great cunning, and the Hill of Blank shall be gay with colours, and bring joy to the eye of the traveller as he beholds its golden towers from afar. Indeed a goodly scheme."

In the same way it would be well if a summer gathering of people should suggest a parterre of flowers rather than a swarm of black beetles.

Twilight fell when we were in the wilds of Holmbury Hill. A dull streak of light gleamed for a long time as we retraced our steps to Friday Street, and by the time we had arrived there the moon was getting up and this little town looked more eerie than ever. I have sketched both these effects as well as I could, facing page 28 and this page.

The highest point in Surrey, Leith Hill, is only a few miles from this spot, in fact Abinger Bottom is at the foot of the rise of the hill on its less steep side. The summit of the tower, that conspicuous landmark of the county, overtops 1000 feet. All sorts of stories are current as to the purpose of this structure built in 1766. Tradition asserts that an eccentric farmer "was buried on horseback upside down, so that when the world was turned—as he believed it then soon would be—topsy-turvy, he might at least come up in the right position." A very similar story is told of Box Hill.

Whether it was on account of this story, or for some other reason, there is no doubt that sightseers and visitors



A NOCTURNE OF FRIDAY ST.



to the place did a great deal of damage to the structure, and in 1795 it was bricked up by the then owners. In 1864 a new entrance was made, and it was open to the public.

Upon either side of Leith Hill are two camps, Anstiebury and Holmbury, British camps, each situated on a hill. The derivation of Anstiebury is given as Hean Stige Byrig, or Bury of the High-way. This highway is attributed by some to Stane Street, the Roman highway which runs within half a mile of the hill, and by others to the older British track which links Coldharbour to Dorking.

Coldharbour is a village 800 feet high, the highest in Surrey, and one from which wide and wonderful prospects can be seen. The Ordnance Surveyors, on a day in 1844, record that they could count the towers of forty-one churches in London as well as a glimpse of the channel beyond Shoreham, and were in a more fortunate position then than we can ever be now, inasmuch as with all this prospect of the world they could not have seen the Crystal Palace. The Crystal Palace is the *bête noire* of artists near London. There is always some wretched boy or man who hopes to gain pence by taking you to a point from which you can see it.

Can any one tell me why so many country people do not seem to have the vaguest idea of distance? The first time I ever went up to the summit of Leith Hill to view the tower at close quarters, it was on a misty morning. I met a man who said I was "right on it," and could not miss it. After walking in all directions for an hour and a half, I met another



optimist who told me exactly the same thing and pointed out exactly where I should find it. After another hour or so, I ran it down. It was a good three-quarters of a mile from the place where I was "right on it." Three-quarters of a mile is a long way in a fog.



ELSTEAD.

III

A WILD-GOOSE CHASE  
TO CHIDDINGFOLD

Concerning the legendary loss and reappearance of the river Mole—  
“ I listen not to the country people telling it was experimented by a goose,  
which was put in and came out again with *life* (though without feathers).”

THOMAS FULLER.



John G. S. 1911

## A WILD-GOOSE CHASE TO CHIDDINGFOLD

I MUST defend myself at the outset of this pointless story by putting all the blame for our folly upon Brown. If it were not for this chance to save my face I should hardly have had the pluck to recount how we started out to find stalactite caves in a clay country. They were supposed to be at Chiddingfold. It is quite easy now to see that the whole quest was absurd, but Brown's news of a great discovery was so circumstantial that I did not attempt to check it by a reference to geological maps, but merely acquiesced in a most unscientific and uncritical spirit. After all, to

a man who is after sketches one scheme of exploration is as good as another, and I have often known Brown's wild-goose chases furnish material both rich and unexpected. It may be a very absurd thing to give a magnificent pyrotechnic display on the 29th of August to celebrate the coming of the New Year, but the wisest of us can enjoy the fireworks.

The legend of the caves began in this wise. Brown was visiting an artist friend of mine who was designing posters for the Southern Railway. Incidentally he mentioned that some remarkable caves had been discovered, only just discovered, at Chiddingfold. I believe now that he was mistaken, or that Brown was mistaken, in the name, and thus the whole theory Brown built up falls to the ground. However, Brown looked up Chiddingfold on the map and found it was in Surrey, south of Guildford. He had also been meaning to get up an inquiry, for my benefit, of the mystery of the subterranean disappearance of the Mole. "The sullen Mole which runneth underneath" is Milton's description of this stream, and tradition and legend, both before and since, credits this little river with extraordinary behaviour.

Consequently, when Brown rushed into my studio one day to drag me off on a quest of underground rivers, he had a theory cut and dried and an itinerary ready. As usual he did not give me any notice.

"Great discovery," he announced excitedly. "I think I have found a clue to the much-discussed disappearance of the Mole. In chalk and limestone regions there are underground rivers. Some can be found in Palestine. One is an





W.C.

WITLEY.



intermittent stream caused by a subterranean lake filling up to a certain level and then syphoning out until empty. It then remains dry till the reservoir is filled up again, when it starts afresh."

"But," I protested, "Surrey is not limestone, it is mostly sand."

"No, you are wrong there. The central region is chalk, the Pilgrim's Way, Hog's Back, etc., and some chalk forms caves and stalactites—like the one we are after. Also there is a certain level in the chalk called the water-level, into which depth it is necessary to go in sinking wells."

We went to Guildford and used that as our base. Brown expounded his theories during the journey. Chiddingfold is on the system of the Wey, and not the Mole, but Brown glossed over that by saying we should no doubt find the secret of the Mole in the underground rivers of these caves, and we should probably make similar discoveries in the Mole when we had found out how the subterranean system worked.

Witley was, we were told, the station for Chiddingfold, so we journeyed thither. As soon as we alighted from the train Brown asked the station-master how far it was to the newly discovered caves. The somewhat surprised station-master had never heard of them. We then asked a porter, who said he had lived in the neighbourhood all his life, and he too was entirely ignorant of their existence.

"It's the same everywhere," Brown explained with scorn. "Local people never know anything about topography.

I expect if you went to Rome you would find people who had never heard of St. Peter's."

We sought first the village of Witley, and then we tramped to Chiddingfold.

Witley has many artistic and literary associations. J. C. Hook, Birket Foster, and Mrs. Allingham are among the luminaries of the world of artists, and George Eliot lived and wrote at Witley Heights. The village is an attractive one. I have sketched here some old houses near the church and from a point further south, not more than a mile from the railway station, have endeavoured to capture a glimpse of Hindhead through the trees of the valley.

Aubrey records that in Witley Park "there are now no deer, but instead thereof iron ore, and two forges." I did not remind Brown of this, however, as I expected he might rush off at a tangent and start discovering hammer ponds. We were in the iron country. Thursley is mentioned in old documents as having a furnace, and Chiddingfold also was the centre of other iron-smelting activities.

Comparisons are fruitless, and to be a judge in a beauty competition is a mug's game. I will therefore not take a hand in the attempt to label any one village in Surrey as the most picturesque. It all depends on what quality you are looking for. Shere, Gomshall, and Thursley are three of the competitors together with Chiddingfold, and Thorpe has been added to these, as a possible winner, by Mr. Eric Parker.

Cobbett found at Chiddingfold a Government "folly" of which, however, there are no traces now as at Chilworth.



A WATERMILL AT GUILDFORD





Here is his note in *Rural Rides*, just over one hundred years ago.

“From North Chapel we came to Chiddingfold, which is in the Weald of Surrey; that is to say, the country of oak timber. Between these two places there are a couple of pieces of that famous commodity called ‘Government Property.’ It seems that these places, which have extensive buildings on them, were for the purpose of making gunpowder. Like most of these enterprises, they have been given up after a time, and so the ground and all the buildings, and the monstrous fences, erected at enormous expense, have been sold. . . . It would be curious to have a complete history of these pretty establishments at Chiddingfold; but this is a sort of history that we shall never be treated with until there be somebody in Parliament to rummage things to the bottom. It would be very easy to call for a specific account of the cost of these establishments, and also of the quantity of powder made at them. I should not be at all surprised if the concern, all taken together, brought the powder to a hundred times the price at which similar powder could have been purchased.”

The particular glory of Chiddingfold is the old Crown Inn. I will not be rash enough to give its foundation a date, but some of it is certainly pre-Elizabethan. Not only is this place picturesque in itself, but it stands in such a pleasing setting, at the corner of a large green, and facing, across some space, the quaint lich-gate of the church. This is the view I have sketched at the head of this chapter.

The complete absurdity of our quest was demonstrated to us by the genial host of the Crown, but some faint hope emerged when he told me that some caves had recently been discovered at Compton, near Godalming. He did not know anything about them, however, and advised us to follow up the clue, and wishing us luck in the quest.

Before many hours we were in the neighbourhood of Compton. Again we were disillusioned. There *had* been a discovery of "caves," but they were merely excavations for sand, the white sand used for sprinkling on the floors of inns

and the like, and of no historical or geological interest. We did not even go to see them, because our informant, the owner of a shop in Compton, told us that we were doubtless after some old smugglers' caves in Guildford, caves which extended under the High Street.

Hope revived. I had long ago given up anticipating a



OLD COTTAGES, EASHING.



EASHING BRIDGE.

prospect of finding Brown's visionary grottos and subterranean rivers, but this sounded like something picturesque. There *is* or *was* a subterranean waterway under some hill, but this is of artificial construction and is nothing more than a tunnel of the Wey and Arun navigation system. I will reserve a few odd sketches of this country that I made on our wild-goose chase for another chapter, with the exception of the quaint bridge at Eashing above, and get on with this very dull piece of history.

From Compton we climbed the Hog's Back by means of a footpath. Just before we reached the summit of the ridge

we could see a glorious view of rolling country stretching towards Haslemere (facing this page), and then we found ourselves at the third milestone from Guildford, which we made while it was yet light.

The difficulties of getting into the caves, however, were still insuperable. Only one man had a key, and he was out of Guildford for the day. However, a rumour of a second key to the place in which the entrance to the caverns was situated led us to call upon Mr. P. G. Palmer, the master of Abbot's Hospital.

He received us with great courtesy. Offered to tell us pretty well everything that could be known about these caves. Fetched plans and photographs and incidentally revealed bit by bit the utter futility of our quest. These chalk excavations were nothing less than quarries for obtaining building material. It is not usually known how frequently chalk was used for architectural work many centuries ago. Within the experience of my own sketching explorations of old buildings I have come across it frequently. A good deal of the older part of Bisham Abbey is built of chalk. There is a lot of interior work in chalk in the churches of the chalk regions of Kent, and I could show you cottages of modern days built of chalk. There is one in Rochester. However, the best material is that quarried at some depth, and evidently to get this harder material these subterranean galleries had been made under Guildford.

The original entrance to these workings was near the Castle Arch, in the gardens of some cottages, but these had





FROM THE HOGS' BACK LOOKING SOUTH WEST



long ago been covered and the existence of the caves had been forgotten. Their rediscovery, however, by means of sinking a shaft caused all sorts of stories, most of them of great absurdity.

Mr. Palmer showed us plans of these "caves," and assured us that, although we could not succeed in getting into them at once, we should miss nothing whatever by not doing so. The galleries (I write from memory) are about half a dozen in number and parallel. As some worked out they were apparently used as shoots for the rubbish and small "dust" of the live workings, and are considerably choked up from this cause.

"You have not left us much romance, sir," said Brown somewhat ruefully. "And I suppose, as far as finding any traces of subterranean watercourses after the manner of the disappearing Mole, we are on a wild-goose chase."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Palmer, smiling and reaching down a book, "I think I can actually capture you the goose."

The book was the *Worthies* of Thomas Fuller.

"Some people will believe anything, and almost anything has been asserted as to the disappearance of the Mole. The popular idea is that it plunges headlong into a hole in the ground at Mickleham and appears again at Leatherhead. As a matter of fact the ground is spongy, and in dry seasons the bed of the river is almost without water, which is flowing along through various fissures in the chalk rock—ah, here is the piece I wanted."

He proceeded to read :

*" I listen not to the country people telling it was experienced by a goose, which was put in and came out again with life (though without feathers) ; but hearken seriously to those who judiciously impute the subsidency of the earth in the interstice aforesaid to some underground hollowness made by that water in the passage thereof."*

Thus ended our quest. We thanked Mr. Palmer for his enlightening talk and proceeded on our way.

As we walked down the picturesque old High Street of Guildford, sadder but wiser men, Brown exclaimed, rather wistfully :

" When I come to think of it, I have heard that story about the goose before, except that I remember the bird used for the experiment as a swan."

I resisted the temptation to say something smart, but I could not help thinking how characteristic of Brown was his recollection of the story. All his geese are swans.

I cannot leave Guildford without " working off " a few sketches of this most delightful old town, however inconsistent I may be considered for allowing them to appear as part of Unknown Surrey. The view I have sketched of the High Street is perhaps one of the best known of any in the South of England, but for the sake of the gloriously sunny effect of this queen of streets on a bright morning I am compelled to sketch it. Our old friend the Lion appears on the left, and the outstanding feature of Guildford, the Town



Donald H. McNeill

HINDHEAD, FROM THE FIELDS  
NEAR WITLEY STATION.





Hall clock, can be seen against the blue morning sky. There was some talk of widening this street for the sake of traffic requirements, but I understand an alternative road is to be made, so that this magnificent street can be left more or less as it is.

I could wish all city councils could be equally wise. I have just been engaged in a losing fight against the vandal Town Council of Rochester. With the usual feasible excuse—road improvement—but really from want of thought, until it was too late, these guardians of the quaint treasures of old Rochester have shown their worth by pulling down one of the old arches dating from the Napoleonic era before Waterloo. Guildford had a narrow escape about forty years ago from a similar improvement—to wit, pulling down Guildford Castle; but happily there were enough sane people on the council to make any such vandalism impossible. The plan that was rejected (according to D. G. C. Williams) suggested “that the *ugly ruin* in the centre of the grounds should be removed and in lieu of it should be erected *a light iron bandstand, painted green, picked out with gold!*”

So do not lose courage, O ye City Powers in Rochester. If those annoying people in the Civic Society and elsewhere would only let you alone, you might still improve the Castle Gardens by clearing away a lot of old stonework and have a ferro-concrete Kursaal instead—with knobs on it!

Another sketch of Guildford, one which incidentally shows the castle against the dawn, is of the old mill on the Wey, now a power station for electric light. It belongs to

the municipality, and they are to be congratulated on retaining the picturesque interest of the place without sacrificing any of its utility for modern needs.

I found the best sketch just at daybreak, when the lights of the mill still shone out from grey shadows.



IV

A PASTORAL OF POWDER-MILLS

This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful providence as one of the choicest retreats of man, which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been by ungrateful man so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable of purposes, in carrying into execution two of the most damnable inventions that ever sprang from the minds of man under the influence of the devil! namely, the making of *gunpowder* and of bank notes!—COBBETT.





JOHN R. RAYBURN

THE VALLEY OF THE TILLINGBOURNE.

## A PASTORAL OF POWDER-MILLS

NOT many days had we sojourned in Guildford when Brown, ever ready to make suggestions for my sketch-book wanderings in Surrey, propounded an entirely new plan of attack.

“I have thought out,” he said, “a side of English history which has been entirely neglected. Carlyle maintained that modern civilization was based upon three things—Printing, Protestantism, and Powder, the three P’s. I forget whether he put it quite like that. If he lived now and wrote week

by week for a Sunday paper he would certainly have done so. However, gunpowder is one of the three things. Now, as far as the study of Surrey goes, both Protestantism and Printing are matters which Surrey always shared with other parts of England, but the manufacture of gunpowder was for a long time exclusively hers.

“You will remember how the subject of ironworks of the Weald was one which loomed large in the history of Sussex. That was all very well, but ordnance without ammunition would not have been much use. To Sussex, as well as in a lesser degree to Kent and Surrey, the British



BELOW THE POOL OF LONDON



OFF ROTHERHITHE.

Navy looked for guns, but *it was to Surrey that she looked for gunpowder.*

“Up till the time when Henry Reve established a mill in 1554 at Rotherhithe, mark you, in *Surrey*, all our gunpowder came from abroad. It is said that had the Spaniards known of the extraordinary shortness of our supply of gunpowder and consequently employed different tactics in sending to our shores the great Armada, they might have walked over us.

“Learning a lesson from this narrow escape, Parliament began to turn its attention towards ensuring an adequate supply of powder for both Army and Navy.

“To further this cause one George Evelyn (the grandfather of the literary John Evelyn of Wotton) was licensed

to dig saltpetre in Great Britain and Ireland. Near Kingston, he built powder-mills on the Hogsmill River, and from this time onwards the history of England pivoted upon Surrey, for it was always in Surrey that the successors of these



POWDER-MILLS IN SURREY.

works flourished. At Godstone and at Chilworth almost all the gunpowder in England was turned out, and it was the control of these powder-mills by the Parliamentary forces during the Civil War that did more than anything



*Wm. H. H. H. H.*

A WOODLAND WATERMILL NEAR GODSTONE





else to turn the tide of battle against the Royalist armies."

I did not have time or energy to cross-examine Brown's reading of the history of England or of Surrey powder-mills, but fell in readily enough with his scheme of visiting those



TRACES OF MEDIÆVAL WORK IN A RIVERSIDE WAREHOUSE,  
ROTHERHITHE.

peaceful haunts of Godstone and Chilworth that had become thus associated with war. Chilworth remained, until the year following the last war, a manufactory of explosives, for I believe cordite was turned out there in large quantities.

The water-mills at Chilworth were also famous for the

making of paper for banknotes, a fact which so enraged Cobbett that for some pages his *Rural Rides* becomes nearly as explosive as the accursed gunpowder. He writes :

“ This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful providence as one of the choicest retreats of man’s, which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been, by ungrateful man, so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable inventions of the devil! namely, the making of *gunpowder* and of *bank-*



FIGURES ON A SCHOOLHOUSE, ROTHERHITHE.



OLD WOODEN HOUSES, ROTHERHITHE.

*notes !* Here in this tranquil spot, where the nightingales are to be heard earlier and later in the year than in any other part of England ; where the first bursting of the bud is seen in spring, where no rigour of seasons can be felt ; where everything seems formed for precluding the very thought of wickedness ; here has the devil fixed on as one of the seats of his grand manufactory ; a perverse and ungrateful man not only lends him aid, but lends it cheerfully. As to the gunpowder, indeed, we might get over that. In some cases it may be innocently and, when it sends the lead at the hordes that support a tyrant, meritoriously employed.



The alders and the willows, therefore, one can see, without so much regret, turned into powder by the waters of this valley; but the *Bank-notes*! To think that the springs which God has commanded to flow from the sides of the happy hills for the comfort and the delight of man; to think that these springs should be perverted into means of spreading misery over a whole nation, and that, too, under the base and hypocritical pretence of promoting its *credit* and maintaining its *honour* and its *faith*! There was one circumstance, indeed, that served to mitigate the melancholy excited by these reflections; namely, that a part of these springs have, at times, assisted in turning rags into Registers! Somewhat cheered by the thought of this, but, still, in a more melancholy mood than I had been for a long while, I rode on with my friend towards Albury up the valley."

Taking these in their chronological order we search Rotherhithe in vain for the first powder-mills. There is one building, however, on the riverside which is partly mediæval with later editions. I have sketched this on page 59. The old-time buildings of Rotherhithe, however, belong to a much later date, and, like the church, are





BERMONDSEY ABBEY.





comfortably Queen Anne or Georgian. There are some fine old doorways. One can picture the time when sea captains and wealthy merchant venturers lived in Rotherhithe, but this order has passed away and their houses have fallen



THE ANGEL, ROTHERHITHE.

upon evil days. The balconied *Angel* still stands, half in the water at high tide, a vantage point from which to view the life of the busy river. There are some quaint, painted wooden figures outside the school house well worth seeing,

and some of the wooden buildings in the streets of Rotherhithe still retain their picturesque lines in spite of being much toned down by London's smoke.

We could not find out anything about Henry Reve in this part of the world, so pursued our inquiries in the region of Hogsmill River. Ewell was our first objective, because we did not know quite whereabouts on this stream the mills stood, and as the very beginning of Hogsmill River is a spring in Ewell, and as the infant watercourse flows merrily by the roadside of that town, we felt we should not miss much by starting at the source.

Curiously enough a friend of mine who lived near Ewell had once told me of a very old map which he had found with "site of powder-mills" marked upon it at this place. I believe this spot has long ago been built over, however, and we could find no clue to Henry Reve's once-removed factory.

The name of the stream is taken from *some* mill, however, and I should like to know who was the Hog who built a mill thereon. An antiquary of Kingston told me that the name came from Og, the Saxon. I had always thought the water-mill came with the Normans, and that it was not until after the Conquest that water-mills were set up in England. If I had been left to give a wild guess, all by myself, I should have plumped for Hogge and linked it up with the maker of the first bombs. Ralf Hogge cast the first cannon in Buxted in Sussex, and together with William Bawd, a Frenchman, invented the explosive projectile " which



A BURNT MILL AT GODSTONE.



would kill or spoil a man” who was unfortunate enough to be hit by it. His family had extensive ordnance works, and it would seem a likely thing that some lucrative branch of the ordnance business and a logical sequence to it would be the making of gunpowder. This is the most baseless guesswork, and I have no evidence whatever that Hogsmill River was ever so-called because of Hogge’s Mill for the making of explosives.

In the course of our detective-like inquiries concerning powder-mills, we found much to delight us in the neighbourhood of Ewell.

The most interesting bit of all in some ways, although it is nothing to look at, is a fragment of the banqueting-hall of the Great Palace that Henry VIII. began to build in 1538. It was intended to be the most wonderful



AN OLD DOORWAY IN ROTHERHITHE.



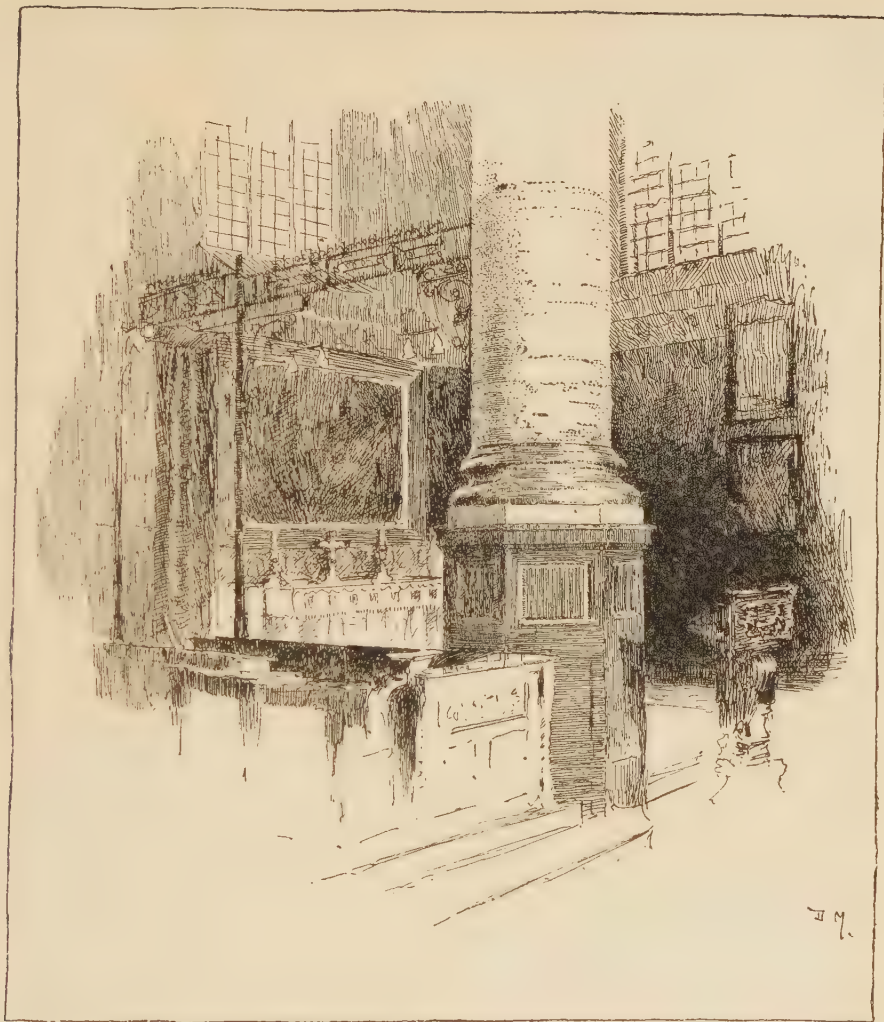
palace in the world, and was consequently named Nonsuch Palace. Henry died before it was finished, but Mary sold it to the Earl of Arundel, who completed the work. Queen Elizabeth acquired it later, and it became a Royal Palace again, and in the reign of Charles II. became the Exchequer after the Fire of London.

Pepys describes it in his diary :

“ A very noble house and a delicate park about it where just now there was a doe killed for the King, to carry up to the Court.”

Another picture of this place in 1666 is given by John Evelyn.

“ January. I supp’d in None-such House, whither the office of the Exchequer was transferr’d during the plague, at my good friend Mr. Packer’s, and took an exact view of the plaster statues and bass relievos inserted ’twixt the timbers and punchions of the outside walles of the Court ; which must needs have ben the work of some celebrated Italian. I much admir’d how it had lasted so well and entire since the time of Hen. VIII. expos’d as they are to the aire ; and pittty it is they are not taken out and preserv’d in some drie place ; a gallerie would become them. There are some mezzo-relievos as big as life, the storie is of the Heathen Gods, emblems, compartments, etc. The Palace consists of two courts, of which the first is of stone, castle-like, by the Lo Lumlies (of whom ’twas purchas’d), the other of timber, a Gothic fabric, but these walls incomparably beautiful. I observ’d that the appearing timber, punchions, entrelices, etc.,



IN ST. MARY'S,  
ROTHERHITHE.



were all so cover'd with scales of slate, that it seem'd carv'd in the wood and painted, the slate fastened on the timber in pretty figures, that has, like a coate of armour, preserv'd it from rotting. There stands in the garden two handsome stone pyramids, and the avenue planted with rows of faire elmes, but the rest of these goodly trees, both of this and of Worcester Park adjoyning, were fell'd by those destructive and avaricious rebels in the late warr which defac'd one of the stateliest seates his Majesty had."

At Old Malden there is a claimant to the honour of being an old powder-mill, but the last mill on the river, the big wooden structure not half a mile from the mouth of the Hogsmill River, where it flows into the Thames at Kingston, seemed to be the most likely.

Below this mill is a water-splash, and then comes a picturesque jumble of houses by the old bridge. The sight of this bridge, by the King's Stone, does not at once disclose the fact that it is old. From the road it appears to be modern. It is, however, a good three hundred years old, and my sketch, made from a boat in the stream below, shows more of the structure than can be seen from anywhere else.

I proposed, when I started sketching in Surrey, to include no subjects from the London area of that county. However, you will know by this time that I am always thoroughly inconsistent, and therefore at once break this resolve when it suits me. And, indeed, it were absurd to talk about Rotherhithe and show nothing pictorial. In

my search for any traces of Henry Reve's original powder-mill—and I have found nothing connected even traditionally with this—I have made many notes of old Rotherhithe. The traces of mediæval work in one of the riverside works probably have nothing to do with it, but I give them as the only traces at all, so far as I know, of any building that can have been there in the time of this first gunpowder factory.

The old doorways and quaint corners are worth recording, and the solid and “comfortable” interior of St. Mary's Church is a cameo of Rotherhithe in days gone by.

At Godstone, under the enthusiastic dictatorship of Brown, I found much to employ my sketch-book. The old White Hart alone is worth a visit. This ancient inn, built in the reign of Richard II., is still in its prime, and the green with its pond lies in front of it. We sought out the oldest inhabitants of the village in the public bar, and Brown tried to interest them in the subject of the history of gunpowder manufacture.

“These old chaps will know all the old traditions and stories about the days of George Evelyn,” he said with confidence, “and then we can go—or you can—and sketch the remains of the works.”

I fear that Brown was a little optimistic, however. They had never heard of any mills making gunpowder, but they could tell us all they knew about the mills around Godstone. This took a long time, and led to the consumption of prodigious quantities of beer, and ended in producing





Donald Maxwell

THE OLD BRIDGE  
OVER HOGSMILL RIVER,  
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.





an extraordinarily small amount of information on the subject of mills. However, we started off on the clues supplied and determined to follow them up.

The first mill on the list had been burnt down. I have sketched the site (facing page 66) and the old mill-house below the dam, a very pleasant spot, but we could deduce no evidence of gunpowder. This mill was, nevertheless, upon the site of an older one which may have been one of the original mills of George Evelyn. We had only three possible mills or sites of mills upon our list. It is possible, therefore, that *all* of them were upon the sites of the old powder-mills. Returning by another path across the fields, we arrived back in the village again, and in making further inquiries at the White Hart, came across something else which, although nothing to do with gunpowder, proved to be exceedingly interesting. This was no less than a copy of a newspaper of 1752, *The General Evening Post*. No rivalry to Karlsbad or Harrogate is conjured up now by the name of *Godstone*, yet in those days of the mid-eighteenth century important claims were made for the medicinal waters of Godstone, as the following extract will show.

#### “IRON PEAR-TREE WATER.

“The Proprietors of this New Well having lately been called upon in an extraordinary Manner, they could not, in Justice to the Public and themselves, any longer refrain vindicating their Property, and make known to the World

the superior Qualities of this, the genuine Medicinal Water, rising from their New Well, from the groundless Insinuations of a puffing Proprietor of another Well, set forth in a Parade of Queries published in certain Daily Papers.

“ The Proprietor of the New Well, after they had suffered great Injuries from the Pretenders to the only true Spring, have at length effectually repelled the Attacks of their Envy against this New Well, which by its Situation, and the Methods lately taken, they have defended from any impure Mixture.

“ For as they have employed the same Person to dig this New Well who dug that called the *Old Well*, and having taken indefatigable Pains to trace the Stream of Medicinal Waters, they find it not only to come Northward, but that they have hit upon the Bed or *Stratum* where the Spring is in more strong and powerful Manner impregnated with all the salutary Properties which have render'd the *Iron Pear-Tree Water* so eminent.”

Then follows further proofs of the fact that this is the *one and only* well, and advice not to be put off with any inferior substitute.

“ Therefore, that the Public may be faithfully supplied with the very best Iron Pear-tree New Well Water, so vastly superior to all others of its Nature, the same will come fresh three Times a Week in two and three Gallon Stone Bottles, to Mr. Davis's, Perveyor of Water to his Majesty in *St. Albans Street*, near *St. James's Square*; at Mr. *Eyre's*



OLD MILL,  
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.



Mineral Water Warehouse at *Temple Bar*; at Mr. *Cartwright's*, Engraver, behind the *Royal Exchange*; at the *George Inn* in the Borough of Southwark, at Two Shillings per Gallon, Bottles excepted.

“And for the better accommodating Gentlemen and others who shall chuse to drink the said Waters at the Well, where Attendance will be given by William Halcomb, or at the *White Hart Inn* at *Godstone* in *Surrey*, where it will be brought fresh every Day by Henry Baldwin who may be supplied at any Time with any Quantity at Half Price, that is, 12*d.* per Gallon; the Bottles, if taken away, to be paid for at the Rate of 2*s.* 6*d.* for the three Gallon Bottle, and 2*s.* for the two Gallon Bottle; and upon the Bottle being returned the *Price* shall be repaid; And to prevent Impositions, the Bottles will be marked and sealed with this Inscription—

(HALCOMB AND BALDWIN'S IRON PEAR-TREE WATER,  
THE NEW WELL).

“N.B.—The Poor in general, who bring any Gentleman's Recommendation as being real *Objects*, shall have whatever they will drink at the Well, as often as they please, *gratis*.”

There is no doubt, to-day, of the iron quality of the water of these streams. You can see it in deep rusty scars in some parts of their banks and beds. Felbridge Water, Lingfield, and Crowhurst are names historically associated with the iron-smelting industry, now extinct. In the second of these





A RELIC OF POWDER WORKS.

mills of Godstone, a delightful site under the wooded hill, and reminiscent of the Black Forest, there is a little ravine below the pond, showing by its colouring the presence of the iron ore.

The mill at this part of the Eden system (sketched in these pages) is still working. The jolly miller could

not tell us anything about gunpowder, but he put us on to a clue which we followed up. This was the name of two cottages lower down the valley—Bone Mill Cottages.

The water has now been turned into a new channel, and there is little to suggest that this was the site of a mill, but the miller assured us that tradition makes this the place of some of the old powder works. This discovery, if such guessing can be



HOGSMILL RIVER.



BY THE SIDE OF HOGSMILL RIVER,  
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.



called a discovery, ended our studies of gunpowder at Godstone.

I have looked up a note here from Cobbett to see if the Godstone of to-day and of a century ago are very different, and it seems that there is still a good family likeness. This passage is from *Rural Rides*, January 8, 1822.

“ Godstone, which is in Surrey also, is a beautiful village, chiefly of one street with a fine large green before it, and with a pond in the green. A little way to the right (going from London) lies the vile rotten Borough of *Bletchingly* ; but happily for Godstone out of sight. At and near Godstone the gardens are very neat, and at the Inn there is a nice garden well stocked with beautiful flowers in the season. I here saw, last summer, some double violets as large as small pinks, and the lady of the house was kind enough to give me some of the roots. From Godstone you go up a long hill of clay and sand, and then descend into a level country of stiff loam at top, clay at bottom, cornfields, pastures, broad hedge-rows, coppices, and oak woods, which country continues till you quit Surrey about two miles before you reach East Grinstead. The woods and coppices are very fine here. It is the genuine *oak-soil* ; a bottom of yellow clay to any depth, I dare say, that man can go. No moss on the oaks. No dead tops. Straight as larches. The bark of the young trees with dark spots in it ; sure sign of free growth and great depth of clay beneath.”

On the way to Chilworth, which was the next place on our list, Brown kept me up to the scratch by reading out

extracts from various works on gunpowder. He only informed me to the extent of claiming the Chinese as the inventors of gunpowder an immense time ago. A German monk, Berthold Schwartz, and Roger Bacon are also credited by various writers with its discovery. The first production of gunpowder in England was about the middle of the twelfth century, and according to one writer, although this statement runs counter to Brown's assertion that gunpowder was made only in Surrey, works on a large scale were started at Faversham in the reign of Elizabeth.

The following is from *The New Gresham Encyclopedia*, and gives in a compact form an excellent account of the nature of gunpowder and the requirements in its manufacture.

"The constituents of the 'gunpowder' explosives are generally not explosive alone, but only when mixed. A 'gunpowder' mixture contains carbon or carbonaceous matter like wood-meal, hydrocarbonates, starches, and sugars, etc., which burn owing to the presence of highly oxygenated substances like peroxides, chlorates and perchlorates, nitrates, permanganates, chromates and dichromates, all of which convey the necessary oxygen. In addition, there usually is present some very easily ignited substance like sulphur or sulphides, or phosphorus or phosphides, etc. As compared with other explosives, gunpowder or blackpowder has certain advantages. It is cheap, easily ignited, insensitive to shock, and stable at moderately high temperatures; it burns regularly, and its residue is non-corrosive. But it is weak in power and produces much smoke. It is excellent for





ALL THAT IS LEFT OF A  
WATERMILL AT CHILWORTH.





armour-piercing shell and for rings of time-fuses. Gunpowder made in different countries varies in composition, but for rifle, cannon, and sporting powders it usually contains 74 to 75 parts of saltpetre, 9 to 14 parts of sulphur, 12 to 16 parts of charcoal. For blasting powders less saltpetre and more charcoal is used. Charcoal is made by the carbonization of wood. In England dogwood, alder, and willow woods are used ; in Germany alder and willow are used ; in France, black alder and also white alder, poplar, aspen, birch, and hazel ; in Switzerland, hazel wood ; in Spain, oleander, yew, willow, hemp stems, and vine ; in Italy, hemp stems. The wood is generally carbonized in iron retorts. The product is allowed to cool out of contact with air, else it may inflame. Wood burnt for ordnance powders gives a yield of 20 to 30 per cent. charcoal ; that for small arms gives a yield of 40 per cent. The charcoal contains from 68 to 85 per cent. carbon, from 2·8 to 3·7 per cent. hydrogen, from 12 to 27 per cent. oxygen, and may have up to 5 per cent. ash. The saltpetre is found naturally in Chile, India, and in other countries, and is refined by crystallization from water. It is a colourless, crystalline solid. Sulphur, a pale yellow solid, melting-point  $113^{\circ}\text{C}$ ., boiling-point,  $444\cdot5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ., is found in nature and is refined to a purity of 99·5 per cent. and over. It has a low ignition temperature of  $261^{\circ}\text{C}$ ., and makes the powder burn more readily. Under the pressure of the press and the incorporating mill it flows and cements the minute particles of charcoal and saltpetre together. The three ingredients are ground, mixed, sieved, incorporated or mixed in drums or mills,

broken down, and then pressed, corned or granulated, and glazed. Cannon powders receive an addition of graphite to reduce the rate of burning. The powder is then dried in a store, finished in a reel to get rid of the last traces of dust, and blended."

After this and much more that Brown had supplied, we were evidently equipped with nearly sufficient knowledge to set up a powder works. It is interesting to note that the



COTTAGES, GODSTONE.



HEDGE COURT LAKE, FROM THE LOWER END.

wood for charcoal, principally willow and alder, must always have been present in unlimited quantities along the meadows that skirt the river-banks in the neighbourhood of these mills.

The valley of the Tillingbourne, of which I have scribbled a sketch at the heading of this chapter, is a very delightful bit of country. I have already given a picture of it according to Cobbett, and now seek out the spot to study it as it is to-day. Time brings many changes, and the shade of this old political controversialist, if it haunts these rural spots, must now be contented and at rest, for mills neither manufacturing

gunpowder nor bank-note paper now disturb the happy valley. The cordite factory, worked until after the war, has become half a chicken farm and half a ruin. The paper-mill, which turned out, according to Cobbett, the means of lowering the honour and credit of England, is now, all that is left of it, a picturesque waterfall in a delightful garden. The general effect of this I have shown on page 85. It does not do justice to the really beautiful effect, partly because the colouring is so telling, where the old red brick is festooned with climbing weeds, and partly because (between you and me and the gate post) it is a rotten sketch. However, this is a busy day, and I have not time to think it all out again; and there is always the danger of doing a still worse one, so this will have to do. Besides, an artist's life is always full of the unexpected. I once did a drawing that I thought so thoroughly bad in every way that I was hesitating whether to destroy it or not, when a friend came in. He began by making what he really thought was a compliment, but which was rather a backhanded one at the best.

"I say, Maxwell," he said, "I like prowling round your studio. I don't know anything about art and always choose the worst things, and I suppose my taste is hopelessly bad, *but I do like your pictures!*"

He then went on to say that he considered this particular sketch the finest example of my work, which he rated far above Turner, Giorgione, and Velasquez, and promptly offered to *buy it* at any price I liked to name. I should like to be able to say that I struck an attitude similar to that of Ajax



WIRE MILL,  
FELBRIDGE WATER.





defying the lightning, tore the sketch into shreds, and rebuked him for his execrable taste. As a matter of fact, I fell. I let the wretched man buy what he thought was a great masterpiece (he probably thinks so still, or will think so till he reads this) and pocketed the money. So you see what a mercenary lot we artists are, when you get a little below the surface.

The fortunes of war and the advent of a friend in a car took us from Chilworth to East Grinstead, which, as you know, is just over the border of Sussex. However, Brown was very anxious to explore the region around Felbridge Water on account of the lost ironworks of that place. He had a particular interest in Felbridge, because probably here was made the very last attempt at keeping going the southern iron industry. When the coal of the Midlands and the North took the industry away, this ironmaster continued to run his mills on imported coal. To this day there is plenty of iron in the neighbourhood, the question of profit is simply one of fuel.

We found Felbridge Water on the map, and there was another lake on the other side (west) of the road from East Grinstead to Lingfield. "That," said Brown, indicating the ponds and stream of the infant Eden on the map, "is as plain as a pikestaff. The upper water, Hedgecourt Lake, is evidently the power for the furnace, and the lower one, Felbridge Water, is the power for the forge."

To bear this out, we found that at the outfall of Hedgecourt Lake was a ruined mill, but we could find no evidence

from local hearsay as to what this mill had been used for. At the outfall of the lower lake stands Wire Mill, a place definitely known to have been used for ironworks. It is now making electric light with a turbine, and tradition asserts that this mill turned out nails for use in building St. Paul's Cathedral. This is interesting, and links it with Lamberhurst, where the iron balustrade round the cathedral was cast. Woodcock Hill is known on the lake-side as Woodcock Hammer, bearing out that this lower water was once a hammer pond, and there is a Furnace Wood near the upper end of the waters of Hedgecourt Lake.



HEDGE COURT LAKE.

V

LITERARY SURREY

Literary history is the great morgue where all seek the dead ones whom they love, and to whom they are related.—HEINE.



## LITERARY SURREY

THERE are three ways of writing of Surrey from the literary point of view. To give some account of those authors who were born in Surrey, of those who have lived and worked in Surrey, and those who have written *about* Surrey. The last list would be a work outside the limits of possibility in a short book like this, for it would in itself be a book.

I propose, therefore, to confine my notes chiefly to those names and places that are associated together by the first two catagories, those writers who, having found themselves sons of Surrey by their birth, have also left us in their works pictures and stories of their own county.

Foremost in this list stand the names of two men of very



different type, John Evelyn of Wotton and William Cobbett of Farnham.

John Evelyn, the seventeenth-century diarist, was born and lived for many years at Wotton Hatch, a stately home of England, hidden in the lovely valley of the Tillingbourne. Here is his own description of the place.

“Wotton, the mansion house of my Father left him by my Grandfather ; (now my eldest Brother’s) ; is situated in the most Southern part of the shire, and though in a valley, yet really part of Lyth Hill one of the most eminent in England for the prodigious prospect to be seen from its summit, tho’ of few observed. From it may be discerned 12 or 13 Counties, with part of the Sea on Coast of Sussex, in a serene day.

“The house is large and ancient, suitable to those hospitable times, and so sweetly environed with those delicious streams and venerable woods, as in the judgment of strangers as well as Englishmen it may be compared to one of the most pleasant seats in the nation, and most tempting for a great person and a wanton purse to make comparisons. I will say nothing of the air, because the pre-eminence is universally given to Surrey, the soil being dry and sandy ; but I should speak much of the gardens, fountains and groves that adorn it, were they not generally known to be amongst the most natural, and (till this later and universal luxury of the whole nation, since abounding in expenses) the most magnificent that England afforded.”

The most famous of Evelyn’s works, and the one most

read to-day, is his *Diary*. It is extremely interesting to compare this with the *Diary* of Pepys, because much of it covers the same period. It differs, however, very fundamentally from Pepys' *Diary* inasmuch as it was intended for posterity, for that of his family certainly, if not for the



THE WEY AT FARNHAM.

whole world of letters, whereas his famous contemporary did not reckon on his notes ever seeing the light of day.

I must quote from an interesting note by John Nesbit, in his introduction to a reprint of *Sylva*, while dwelling on this subject.

“ Each of their *Diaries* teems with reference to the other. Pepys asked Evelyn to sit to Kneller for his portrait which he desired for ‘reasons I had (founded upon gratitude, affection and esteeme) to covet that in effigie which I most truly value in the original.’ This refers to the well-known portrait, now at Wotton, that has been copied and engraved.

“ It appears to have been begun in October, 1685, but it was not till July, 1689, that the commission was actually completed. The portrait exhibits the face of an elderly man distinctly of a high-strung and nervous temperament, though not quite to the extent of being ‘sicklied o’er with pale caste of thought.’ His right hand, too, which grasps his *Sylva* is one very characteristic of the nervous disposition. A bright shrewd intellect, lofty thoughts, high motives, good resolves, and—last, tho’ by no means least—a serene mind, the *mens conscia recti* which Pepys bluntly called ‘a little conceitedness,’ are all stamped upon his well-marked and not unshapely features. It is eminently the face of a philosopher, an enthusiast, a studious scholar, and a gentleman.

“ No one can ever know Evelyn so well as Pepys did ; and here is his opinion of John Evelyn, expressed in the secret page of his cipher *Diary* on November, 1665 : ‘In fine, a most excellent person he is, and must be allowed a little for a little conceitedness, but he may well be so, being a man so much above others.’ And this just exactly bears out the rough general impression conveyed by the perusal of Evelyn’s *Diary* and his other literary works. The long friendship of these two was only terminated by the death of Pepys on 26th



IN AN OLD SURREY GARDEN.

May, 1703, not long before Evelyn had himself to depart from his life. ‘ This day died Mr. Sam. Pepys, a very courtly, industrious and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in which he had passed through all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts, and Secretary of the Admiralty, all which he performed with great integrity. When King James II. went out of England, he laid down his office and would serve no more. . . . He was universally belov’d, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skilled in music, a very great cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation. . . . Mr. Pepys had been for near 40 years so much my particular friend, that Mr. Jackson sent me compleat mourning, desiring me to

be one to hold up the pall at his magnificent obsequies, but my indisposition hinder'd me from doing him this last office.' ”

Evelyn received the first rudiments of his education at Wotton and then at Lewes in Sussex, where he lived with his grandfather. After his grandfather's death in 1627, he went to the free school at Southover until he went up to Balliol College, Oxford, at sixteen years of age, residing afterwards at the Middle Temple.

In 1641 he visited Holland. Two years later he “obtayned a lycence of his Majestie, dated at Oxford and sign'd by the King, to travell againe.”

He embarked in a boat from the Tower and journeyed to Sittingbourne. The voyage was not a happy one :

“being only a payre of oares, expos'd to a hideous storm, thence posting to Dover accompanied by an Oxford friend, Mr. Thicknesse, and crossing the Channel to Calais.”

At Paris he discloses in an amusing way that the trend of realism in painting was evidently looked upon with approval. He writes of Richelieu's villa at Ruell :

“At the end of it is the Arch of Constantine, painted on a wall in oyle, as large as the real one in Rome, so well don that even a man skilled in painting may mistake it for stone and sculpture. The skie and hills which seem to be between the arches are so naturall that swallows and other birds, thinking to fly through, have dashed themselves against the wall. I was infinitely taken with this agreeable cheate.”

After a tour in Normandy, where he collected much





COBBETT'S BIRTHPLACE, FARNHAM





material for his works on gardening and forestry, he proceeded to Italy, arriving in Rome in November, 1644. After a few months he visited Florence and Venice, where he saw the Doge espouse the Adriatic with great splendour and pomp. He alludes to this in his *Diary* when writing of a pageant on the Thames, and compares our English pageantry very favourably with it.

After severe illness and more travel abroad he returned to England, and was in London during the execution of Charles I. He does not seem to have been penalized to a great extent by the Commonwealth, but his father-in-law's estate, Sayes Court, at Deptford (part of which is in Kent and part in Surrey) was seized by the rebels. He compounded with them, however, and began in 1653 a great deal of horticultural work, planting and laying out large areas of waste land.

After the Restoration Evelyn settled down to his literary work. It was in 1664 that he published :

*Sylva : or a Discourse of Forest Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majestie's Dominions ; Pomona : or an Appendix concerning Fruit Trees in relation to Cider, the Making and several ways of Ordering it ; and Ralendarium Hortense ; or the Gard'ners Almanack, directing what he is to do Monthly throughout the Year.*

The public interest in forestry which had been stimulated by Evelyn's work brought him to the special notice of the King. The author records :

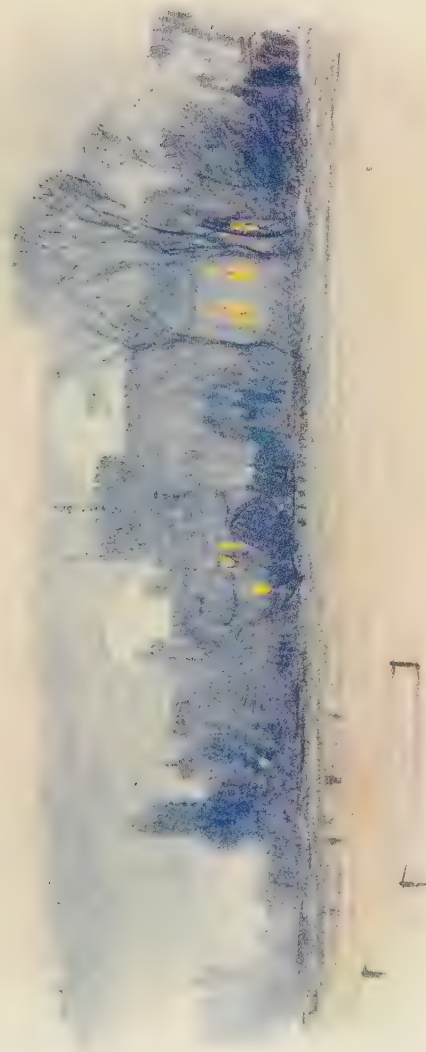
“Upon this encouragement I was once speaking to a mighty man, then in despotic power, to mention the greater inclination I had to serve his Majesty in a little office then newly vacant (the salary, I think, hardly £300) whose province was to inspect the timber trees in his Majesties Forests, etc., and take care of their culture and improvement ; but this was conferr’d upon another who, I believe, had seldom been out of the smoak of London, where though there was a great deal of timber, there were not many trees. I confesse I had an inclination to the imployment upon a publique account as well as its being suitable to my rural genius, borne as I was at Wotton, among the woods.”

This mention of the “smoak of London” brings me to the most interesting of all Evelyn’s writings, a treatise and a protest of what was even then a formidable disadvantage to London life, the smoke nuisance. It is entitled :

*Fumugium : or the Inconvenience of the Aer and Smoak of London Dissipated, together with some Remedies humbly proposed.*

It runs in a somewhat fulsome vein and is dedicated thus to His Majesty :

“It was one day, as I was walking in Your Majesty’s Palace at White Hall (where I have sometimes the honour to refresh myself with the sight of Your Illustrious Presence which is the Joy of Your Peoples hearts) that a presumptuous Smoak issuing from one or two tunnels near *Northumberland*



OXFORD CHURCH



*House*, and not far from Scotland Yard, did so invade the Court ; that all the Rooms, Galleries, and Places about it were fill'd and infested with it ; and that to such a degree, as Men could hardly discern one another from the Clowd and none could support, without manifest Inconveniency. It was not this which did first suggest to me what I had long since conceived against this pernicious Accident, upon frequent observation ; But it was this alone, and the trouble that it must needs procure to your Sacred Majesty, as well as hazard to Your Health, which kindled the Indignation of mine against it, and was the occasion of what it has produc'd in these Papers.

“ Sir, I prepare in this short Discourse an expedient how this pernicious *Nuisance* may be reformed ; and offer at the present Inconveniency ; but (that remov'd) to render not only your Majesties Palace, but the whole City likewise, one of the sweetest, and most delicious Habitations in the World ; and this, with little or no expence ; but by improving those Plantations which Your Majesty so laudably affects, in the moyst, depressed and marshy grounds about the Towne, to the Culture and production of such things, as upon every gentle emission through the *Aer*, should so perfume the adjacent places with their breath ; as if, by a certain charm, or innocent *Magick*, they were transferred to that part of *Arabia*, which is therefore styled *Happy*, because it is amongst the Gums and precious spices.”

Then follows a scheme of planting enormous areas with sweetbrier, woodbine, jessamine, musk, lavender, etc., to



contest against the smell of the smoke. It seems that the smoke must inevitably go on, but the sweet-scented air would act as a kind of anæsthetic and make the *Nuisance* less noticeable. Altogether a quaint scheme of reform.

John Evelyn left his mark not only in Surrey but over all England. To his grandfather belongs the credit of making this country independent of foreign supplies in the matter of gunpowder. To him, at a time when the scarcity of wood for shipbuilding had threatened to become a greater menace to the Navy than all the Dutch Admirals put together, belongs the credit of putting afforestation into a definite place in our agricultural economy. The *Victory* was probably built from oak which the foresight of John Evelyn and his school had planted.

It was sixty years after the death of this famous literary light of Surrey that another, of widely different outlook on life, was born at The Jolly Farmers in Farnham, 1762, one William Cobbett, that sturdy reformer whose fearless independence of thought left such a mark on the political history of his time. He is chiefly remembered in literature now by his *Rural Rides*, a work half topographical and half political. Full both of good sense and prejudice, originality, clear thinking and not a little invective against his multitudinous opponents, it is impossible not to admire much in the author even when not in agreement with his arguments.

At eight years of age he showed his independence of spirit by avenging himself on a huntsman named Bradley,



THORPE AS A CHRISTMAS CARD



who had struck him with a whip without any provocation. He writes :

“ My mind was so strongly imbued with the principles of justice, that I did not rest satisfied until I could inflict upon him a just punishment. And this I did in the following manner :

“ Hounds, especially harriers, will follow the trail of a red herring as eagerly as that of a hare, and rather more so, the scent being stronger and more unbroken.

“ I waited till Bradley and his pack were trailing for a hare in the neighbourhood of Seal Common. They were pretty sure to find, in the space of half an hour, and the hare was pretty sure to go up to the common and over the hill to the south.

“ I placed myself ready with a red herring at the end of a string in a dry field and near a hard path, along which I was pretty sure the hare would go. I waited a long time, the sun was getting high, the scent was bad, but by and by I heard the view halloo and full cry. I squatted down in the ferns, and my heart bounded with the prospect of inflicting justice, when I saw my lady come skipping by, going off towards the south. In a moment I clapped down my herring, went off at a right angle towards the west, climbed up a steep bank very soon where the horsemen could not follow. Then on I went, over the roughest part of the common that I could find, till I got to the pales of Moor Park, over which I went, there being holes at the bottom for the letting in of the hares. That part of the park was covered with

short heath, and I gave some twirls about to amuse Mr. Bradley for half an hour. Then off I went, and down a hanger at last, to the bottom of which no horseman could get, without riding round a quarter of a mile. At the bottom of the hanger was an alder moor in a swamp. There my herring ceased to perform its service. The river is pretty rapid; I tossed it in, that it might go back to the sea, and relate to its brethren the exploits of the land. I washed my hands in the water of the moor, and took a turn, and stood at the top of the hanger to witness the winding-up of the day's sport, which terminated a little before dusk in one of the dark days of November.

"After over-running the scent a hundred times, after an hour's puzzling in the dry field, after all the doubles and turns that the seaborne hare had given them, down came the whole posse to the swamp, the huntsman went round a millhead not far off, and tried the other side of the river.—'No! D—— her, where can she be?'

"And thus, amid conjectures, disputations, mutual blamings, and swearing a plenty, they concluded, some of them half-leg deep in dirt, and going soaking home at the end of a drizzling day."

From the grounds of Farnham Castle, where he was employed at the age of eleven, Cobbett started off on foot to walk to Kew Gardens. He had talked with a gardener from the Royal Gardens and this conversation had fired his imagination. His total wealth at the time was 3½d., threepence of which he spent upon a copy of *The Tale of*

a *Tub*, which he saw in a shop window. For a few days a kindly head gardener gave him employment. History is vague after this, but we can pick up the story again when Cobbett is about twenty years old, visiting a relative in the neighbourhood of Portsmouth.

He is full of the idea of joining the Navy, but is advised



A SNOW SCENE IN THORPE.

by the captain of the *Pegasus* not to do so. He then goes off to London, is for nearly a year employed in a lawyer's office, the dull monotony of which existence drives him to seek fame and glory by enlisting in the Royal Marines. He journeys to Chatham, and although intending to join the Royal Marines, finds that he is enlisted in the 54th Foot



Regiment, then on service in Nova Scotia. He did well, and after a year he lands in Halifax. He rose from private to sergeant-major, married the daughter of a sergeant of artillery stationed at New Brunswick, and obtained his discharge from the Army in 1791.

Coming to modern days, George Meredith and his home at Flint Cottage on Box Hill loom large in the literary interest of Surrey. For many years this author lived in this sylvan retreat and did most of his actual writing in a chalet in the grounds. His novel, *Diana of the Crossways*, has some very vivid pen pictures of Surrey scenery.

Not far away from Box Hill are Mickleham, Bookham, and Chessington, all associated with Fanny Burney, the eighteenth-century novelist, especially the last place, for it was at Chessington Hall that she was living when she wrote her famous *Evelina*, the novel written by stealth in a summer-house in the garden, a book which subsequently took the town by storm. Chessington Hall, which stands close to the small church, one of the smallest in England, has not very materially altered since 1778, the date when the novel was published. The house as we can see it to-day is very much the same as the one seen by Dr. Johnson, who sometimes drove over to see Fanny Burney when he was the guest of the Thales at Streatham.

The entry of the authoress's marriage to General D'Arbley, the French *émigré*, in 1793, can be seen by any one who cares to take the trouble to look in the church registers.

Norbury Park, that beautifully wooded estate that lies



THE VIEW FROM RICHMOND HILL.



between Leatherhead and Mickleham, and across which there is a pedestrian's right of way, is also associated with Fanny Burney, for it was here she was living with her friends, the Locks, at the time of her marriage.

Subsequently both husband and wife went to live at Great Bookham and at Camilla Cottage at West Hamble, a house she built out of the proceeds of her novel, *Camilla*.

Edward Gibbon was another distinguished son of Surrey, born in 1737 at Lime Grove between Putney and Wimbledon.

*Lector* : This is a very dull chapter.

*Pictor* : It is, I agree, appallingly so ; but what am I to do ?

*Lector* : Condense it a bit and get on with some pictures.

*Pictor* : The pictures are just the trouble. There is a certain hard-and-fast convention in the making of books, and it is this, that pictures cannot follow each other without print in between. Why this is so I don't know. Hence, " words, words, words," even when pictures would have done better. I will tell you a story of how I once outwitted my publisher.

*Lector* : Shh ! He'll never hire you to write another book. If he sees——

*Pictor* : Bless you, you dear, simple-minded soul. Do you suppose publishers ever read the stuff they publish ? Besides—on second thoughts I *won't* tell the story.\*

\* Speaking of publishers, I am indebted to Mr. Cecil Palmer for his giving me many facts concerning the literary associations of the Thames Valley from *The Author's Thames*, by Gordon S. Maxwell. It is a book that deals very fully with this interest.

In the quaint old town of Chertsey is a house known as Porch House, once the home of Abraham Cowley, the seventeenth-century poet. He lived here during the latter years of his life, died here, and his body was conveyed in state upon the waters of the river he loved so well to its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey.

A near neighbour of his was Sir John Denham, the Cavalier poet, who lived in a house now the vicarage at Egham. His poem, *Cooper's Hill*, is a vivid and beautiful word-picture of this part of riverside Surrey.

In this neighbourhood, and among the green glades of Windsor Forest, Shelley wrote much of his *Alastor*, a work that has always been considered descriptive of the landscape of this part. The assumption is fanciful, but no doubt these lines concerning the mysteries of the woods could have been written very appropriately among the great trees that fringe this border of Surrey:

" The oak,  
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,  
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids  
Of the tall cedar overarching frame  
Most solemn domes within, and far below,  
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,  
The ash and the acacia floating hang  
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed  
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,  
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around  
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,  
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,  
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,  
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs  
Uniting their close unions; the woven leaves

Make network of the dark blue light of day,  
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable  
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns  
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,  
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms  
Minute yet beautiful."



ST. ANNE'S HILL.

At Paines Hill Cottage at Cobham Matthew Arnold worked for many years, and died there in 1888.

The country round about Richmond has always been a favourite one with authors. Here it was that James Thomson lived—in a house now part of Richmond Hospital—and wrote his *Seasons*. In this region of the world was written, too, a great part of the *Beggar's Opera*, when Gay was living with the Duke of Queensbury at Ham. The duel



scene in *Nicholas Nickleby* gives us a telling description of Ham Fields. It was written when Dickens lived at Elm Lodge on the Petersham Road.

In writing of the literary association of Box Hill I had nearly forgotten Keats, who was staying at Burford Bridge, at the foot of the hill, when he was at work on *Endymion*.

“ Now

Where shall our dwelling be ? Under the brow  
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun  
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none ;  
And where dark yew trees as we rustle through,  
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew ?  
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place ;  
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace  
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd ;  
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,  
And by another, in deep dell below,  
See through the trees, a little river go  
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.”

VI

THAMES-SIDE SURREY

After dinner I walk'd to Ham, to see the house and garden of the Duke of Lauderdale, which is indeede inferior to few of the best villas in Italy itselfe ; the house furnish'd like a great Prince's ; the parterres, flower gardens, perspectives, fountaines, arraries, and all this at the banks of the sweetest river in the world, must needes be admirable.—JOHN EVELYN.



CHERTSEY BRIDGE.

## THAMES-SIDE SURREY

THE first Surrey town upon the Thames is Chertsey, with a graceful stone bridge of seven arches. Unlike most modern bridges that seem to delight in equal spans, this one has its central arch the largest, and the span of the other arches are diminished as they approach the shore.

I suppose a modern engineer will tell me that this up-and-down effect may be very æsthetic, but it is very unpractical. A straight and gradientless method of getting traffic over the river would be great gain. Of course there is no reason why a level bridge built on modern lines should not be as

beautiful as this, but the fact remains that most modern bridges are desperately uninteresting.

I am always more or less at loggerheads with all motor transport people on general principles. I maintain that all transport is a means to an end, and they so often look at it as if it were an end in itself.

It is one of the things for which we can never be too thankful, that motorists did not create the world. Then we should have no hills, no winding ways across mother earth. All rivers would run straight, like canals, in order to have roads along their banks with no waste of mileage from town to town. We should live in a geometrical world, and a bird's-eye view of any landscape would appear as a proposition in Euclid. I have often wondered if the Martians have got so far ahead of us in mechanical transport that they have reduced their world to a wilderness of straight lines and that the so-called canals which astronomers have observed are really motor tracks.

The humour of this practical madness for road improvement at any cost is that it seldom goes far enough. For many years, old lanes and old roads, utterly unsuitable for much motor traffic, have been tinkered up and improved, but they will never be of any use. All that has been done so often is to destroy interesting relics of bygone days, and *then* the road is not any good and a new one has to be planned.

It would be much better to let alone the old and unpractical streets of our old towns and make new trunk roads by them. Otherwise the very *raison d'être* of most motoring for



WINTRY WEATHER: A LANE NEAR THORPE





pleasure will be taken away. If all England is destroyed and there are no quaint old towns and picturesque villages, there will be nothing much to go and see, and for those who merely like travelling from place to place at great speed a municipal motor track, like the one at Brooklands, could be provided for each town. On this, motorists could tear round and round to their hearts' content all the morning, go home to lunch, and then have another hour or two in the afternoon.

This digression makes me think of Ruskin. Of all the literary men of Surrey——

*Lector* : Hold on. We have had "literary Surrey," and now you are well into another chapter.

*Pictor* : Yes; but this is a kind of overflow chapter, and I am using the Thames to carry off the flood. It is a curious thing that the Thames valley seems to have collected poets and writers.

*Lector* : All right, then; but I give you up. I know you can never stick to one thing at a time.

*Pictor* : I am glad you take a philosophic view. You ought to be aware by now that you cannot reform me. [I hate being reformed.] So we will agree to differ.

Ruskin, like Nelson, spent his early days by the banks of the Wandle. His first nature studies, which were afterwards to expand into such moving themes, were made among the weeds and willows of this little river. At Croydon he used to visit a relative, and his first description of the stream near its source occurs thus :

" . . . my chosen domains being, at all other times, the

shop, the bakehouse, and the stone round the spring of crystal water at the back door (long since let down into the modern sewer) ; and my chief companion, my aunt's dog, Towser."

In *Præterita*, too, Ruskin gives a picture of a very different country round this Wandle valley from the region as we know it to-day. Like Max Beerbohm, he has a very poor opinion of the Crystal Palace.

" . . . After walking along its ridge (Herne Hill) southward from London through a mile of chestnut, lilac, and apple-trees, hanging over the wooden palings on each side—suddenly the trees stopped on the left, and out one came on the top of the field sloping down to the south into the Dulwich valley—open field animate with cow and buttercup, and below, the beautiful meadows and high avenues of Dulwich ; and beyond all that crescent of the Norwood hills ; a footpath, entered by a turnstile, going down to the left, always so warm that invalids could be sheltered there in March, when to walk elsewhere would have been death to them, and so quiet, that whenever I had anything difficult to compose or think of, I used to do it rather there than in our own garden. The great field was separated from the path and road only by light wooden open palings, four feet high, needful to keep the cows in. Since I last composed, or meditated there, various improvements have taken place ; first the neighbourhood wanted a new church, and built a meagre Gothic one with a useless spire, for the fashion of the thing, at the side of the field ; then they built a parsonage behind it,



IN THORPE.



the two stopping half the view in that direction. Then the Crystal Palace came, for ever spoiling the view through all its compass, and bringing every show-day from London a flood of pedestrians down the footpath who left it filthy with cigar ashes for the rest of the week ; then the railroads came, and expatiating roughs by every excursion train, who knocked down the palings about, roared at the cows, and tore down what branches of blossoms they could reach over the palings on the enclosed side. Then the residents on the enclosed side built a brick wall to defend themselves. Then the path got to be insufferably hot as well as dirty ; and was gradually abandoned to the roughs, with a policeman on watch at the bottom."

Thames-side Surrey is very rich in literary association, probably on account of the great beauty of the riverside country as a residential area. Evelyn constantly compares the Thames valley with scenes in Italy. Here are two examples from his *Diary*. The first is dated 1662.

"I was spectator of the most magnificent triumph that ever floated on the Thames ; considering the innumerable boates and vessells, dress'd and adorn'd with all imaginable pomp, but above all the thrones, arches, pageants, and other representations, stately barges of the Lord Maior and Companies, with various inventions, musiq and peales of ordnance both from the vessels and the shore, going to meete and conduct the new Queene from Hampton Court to Whitehall, at the first time of her coming to towne. In my opinion it far exceeded all the Venetian Bucentoras, etc., on



the Ascension, when they go to espouse the Adriatic. His Majestie and the Queene came in an antiq-shap'd open vessell cover'd with a state or canopy of cloth of gold, made in form of a cupola, supported with high Corinthian pillars, wreath'd with flowers, festoons, and garlands. I was in our new-built vessell sailing amongst them."

Another comparison is in 1678.

"After dinner I walk'd to Ham, to see the house and garden of the Duke of Lauderdale, which is indeede inferior to few of the best villas in Italy itselfe ; the house furnish'd like a great Prince's ; the parterres, flower gardens, perspectives, fountaines, arraries, and all this at the banks of the sweetest river in the world, must needes be admirable."

Before leaving Thames-side Surrey we must say something of Runnymede, that little island in the river between Staines and Windsor.

It is a curious thing, when we consider the epoch-making importance of this place, the scene of the signing of the Great Charter, that no stone, monument, or other mark indicates Magna Carta Island. It might be passed, and probably *is* passed, by thousands and no notice be taken of it. Yet here, according to the popular belief, is the corner-stone of English freedom.

As a man of Kent I protest against the popular tradition. It is the proud boast of Kent that while all England was a land containing a large proportion of serfs, every man in Kent was free. The Norman invasion did not alter



THE DISTANT LIGHTS OF WINDSOR



this, and even the Conqueror had to bow to the customs of Kent. That the Great Charter was the foundation of English liberty is in some respects a myth. Hear what Charles Sandys says upon the subject.



WHERE FOUR COUNTIES MEET.

“ At the period of the grant of Magna Carta the great body of English people were prædial slaves, in a state of unmitigated servitude ; they were bought and sold like beasts of the plough ; they were transferred from one lord to another, with the manors and lordships to which they were appendant,

and of which they constituted part of the live stock ; their children also were born to no inheritance but slavery. Such was at that period the condition of the labouring population of the country, except in the more favoured province of Kent. Such, and so deep was the curse with which our Norman conquerors had polluted the free soil of Anglo-Saxon Britain ; and that curse continued to hang over our devoted country for many succeeding centuries.

“ Did Magna Carta unloose their bonds ? Did Magna Carta proclaim freedom to the slave, and say to him, ‘ Arise, be free ’ ? Did Magna Carta hold out to the hereditary bondman a ray of hope, any prospect of enfranchisement ? None whatever. Its provisions, its liberties, and its securities were selfishly limited solely and expressly to the *free*. ‘ Nullus liber homo.’ No *free* man, etc., says the Great Charter. None, therefore, could assert the liberties secured by the Charter but those only who were already *free*. The prædial slave and his children had no inheritance in them ; they still remained to drag on their miserable existence without any other prospect of manumission than what might arise from the spontaneous charity of the clergy or from the bounty or benevolence of their lords.”

Compare this with the ancient liberties of Kent.

“ It appeareth,” says Lambard, “ by claime made in our auncient treatise that the bodies of Kentish persons be of free condition, which also is confessed to be true . . . where it is holden sufficient for a man to avoide the objection of

bondage, to say that his father was borne in the shyre of Kent."

Robinson, on the subject of the exemption of Kentish men from villenage, says :

"The Kentish Custumal claims that the bodies of all Kentish men be free, as well as the other free bodies of England ; which was formerly, while many of the subjects



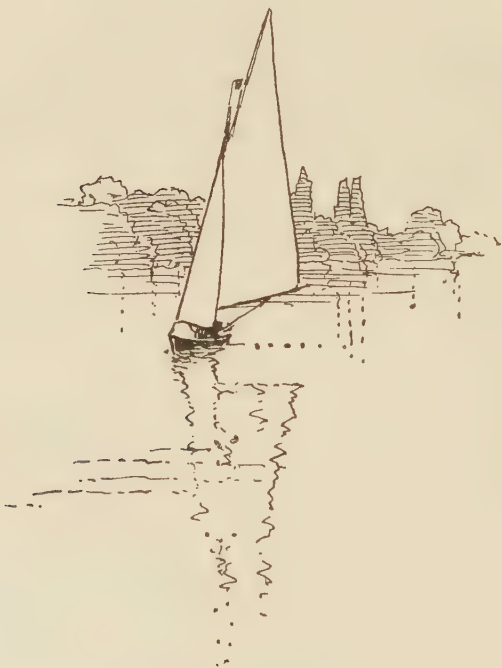
TEDDINGTON, FROM THE TOWPATH ON THE SURREY SIDE.

of this Kingdom remained under a state of hereditary bondage, a most glorious and valuable birthright. . . . In a writ of niefie, the defendant pleaded that she was free ; and the jury found that the father of the defendant was born in Kent ; whereupon, without further inquiry, the court gave judgment that she was free, for that there were no villeins in Kent."

It appears that this universal freedom was part of the common law of Saxon England, and that it was not Kent



alone that treasured these liberties. On the arrival of the Conqueror, however, it was the men of Kent who were powerful enough to wrest a promise from the new monarch to respect their laws in return for their allegiance. This right of personal liberty for all was never yielded in Kent, and so it is held by many that the Great Charter in this respect merely reasserted for *some* (*i.e.* the free) what had been, and still should have been, the birthright of every Englishman.



VII

UGLY DUCKLINGS

It was a bare heath, with here and there, in the better parts of it, some scrubby birch. It has been, in part, planted with fir-trees, which are as ugly as the heath was ; and, in short, it is a most villainous tract.

COBBETT (near Horsham). 1823.

Near Horsham.—Delightful and romantic scenery, heathland and pine land. One of the loveliest stretches of country in England.

ESTATE AGENT'S ADVERTISEMENT. 1923.



THE DEVIL'S JUMPS, FROM THE EAST.

## UGLY DUCKLINGS

WE have seen in our Day with the Devil that taste in scenery is of a very variable character. The things abominated in one age are wildly sought after by the age following. A classic instance of this can be found in Cobbett's denunciation of Windsor Forest, to us one of the loveliest tracts of unspoiled country that can be imagined. Yet here it is, chapter and verse :

“On leaving Oakingham for London, you get upon what is called *Windsor Forest* ; that is to say, upon as bleak, as

barren, and as villainous a heath as ever man set his eyes on. However, here are new enclosures without end. And here are houses, too, here and there, over the whole of this execrable tract of country."

Again, this sturdy farmer is riding through the most lovely and wild region north of Horsham, on the boundaries of Surrey and Sussex, when he writes :

" Then you turn to the right and go over six of the worst miles in England, which miles terminated but a few hundred yards before you enter Horsham. The first two of these miserable miles go through the estate of Lord Erskine. It was a bare heath, with here and there, in the better parts of it, some scrubby birch. It has been, in part, planted with fir-trees, which are as ugly as the heath was ; and, in short, it is a most villainous tract. After quitting it, you enter a forest ; but a most miserable one ; and this is followed by a large common, now enclosed, cut up, disfigured, spoiled, and the labourers all driven from its skirts. I have seldom travelled over eight miles so well calculated to fill the mind with painful reflections."

Lest it should appear that this dislike of wild and lonely scenery was tinged with political prejudice in the case of Cobbett, who so intensely mistrusted manufacturing commercialism as opposed to agricultural interests, it will be well to examine other writers before weighing up the matter. Goldsmith speaks somewhat contemptuously of heaths and barren places. Johnson, likewise, loves not scenes which are undomesticated and without direct evidence of human



DEFOE'S "BLACK DESERT" NEAR BAGSHOT





activities. Forests, however, seem to have been exempted from this condemnation of our forefathers, and even Cobbett, perhaps because of their practical, timber-furnishing qualities, praises them and approves a hillside if it be covered thickly with good, straight-growing trees. Gray, who was intellectually a liason officer between the two schools of thought, the one to which our ancestors belonged and the one to which we belong to-day, in speaking of a heath calls attention to "the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon."

The rise of the modern landscape feeling coincided with the fact that industrialism rendered life more monotonous. People who were herded together within prosaic and humdrum utilitarian towns began to think it most exciting to see miles and miles of heather, and found it most exhilarating to sit in silence far from the madding crowd.

Previous ages had paved the way for this attitude towards nature. Classical times considered the deeds of gods and heroes alone sufficient for pictorial representation. Landscape was no more realistic than the notice, "This is a wood" of the Shakespearean era. Early Christian art was content to keep exclusively to Biblical subjects or those connected with the lives of the Saints, of miracles and marvels, but in no wise to this workaday world except as an incident or setting. Some of the early Italian backgrounds are exquisitely suggestive—little walled towns on hills with mountains and bridges and winding waters; but they are backgrounds only put in to explain and help to tell a story.

Somehow you cannot feel that the painter would ever expect to get a commission for a landscape.

The renaissance brought greater realism of treatment and with it greater realism of setting. Landscape now becomes far more important. Titian shows studies of landscape alone—a wood, some hills; but they are clearly; when not used in religious canvases for use in relation to Venus and Adonis, triumphs of victors and out of the common incidents. Tintoretto, also, shows great power, but again only in a very occasional and subsidiary way, like a pugilist who reveals unexpectedly a profound knowledge of music.

The Dutch adopted landscape, as did Claude, as an end in itself. It was, however, a very domesticated landscape. The waterfalls of Ruysdael, the sea-pieces of Van de Velde, and the sunsets of Claude never escape from the “domesticated” atmosphere. Of the three, Ruysdael can be the nearest and the modern spirit. Van de Velde will never paint a sea for the joy of it, only as a place for exhibiting shipping. Claude’s landscapes are always full of garden-like feeling, even when they are supposed to be wild, and his seaports seem to be built in places where it can never blow hard or suffer from fog.

Contrast this with the modern spirit. The love of wildness and absence of the human element is regarded as a positive virtue. A wilderness of water in mid-Atlantic, a wind-swept heath without a soul in sight or any sign of human habitation, a rock-fanged shore where you will hear nothing for weeks but the bellowing of waves or the cry of





sea-birds—these are looked upon as the veritable goal of the sketcher. I have noticed, too, in studying the various types of visitors to my studio, that the most stay-at-home people are most thrilled by travel pictures, and that I can never make a sea-piece rough enough for clients that would, if on board ship, go green in the face at the most moderate of breezes.

The deduction that we arrive at from this evidence is that most of us like scenes and places to suggest something as different from our own ordinary environment as possible. In starting on this little work, after having “done” Kent and Sussex, I was somewhat surprised at the tremendous enthusiasm that all and sundry had for Surrey. It is so much nearer London than most of these two counties that one would expect a tamer atmosphere. Yet near London as it is, and easily accessible to countless thousands, there is a wonderful wildness about its strips of common land. Ridge after ridge presents itself of sandy waste or pine-covered common, and I think it is this breezy freedom from restraint, symbolized by the gipsy caravan and twinkling fire by the roadside, that especially endears it to the men of Surrey.

The places which our forefathers rejected as “villainous,” “malignant,” “devoid of interest or charm,” have become so sought after for their beauty that they are becoming almost overcrowded.

The ugly ducklings in many cases have developed into swans. Hindhead, positively the ugly duckling of Surrey, has got beyond the swan stage and is rapidly becoming an



ostrich. Or, to take another simile, Cinderella has come into her own, and the places written up by an age that is gone have become the ugly sisters.



VIII  
SURREY IRON

The foundries of Witley and Thursley heaths were the last to be established in Surrey.—M. C. DELANY, *Historical Geography of the Wealden Iron Industry*.



FELBRIDGE WATER.

## SURREY IRON

THE activities of the ironmasters of the Weald began in Sussex, extended into Kent and finally into Surrey. The difficulties of communications made the Surrey works late entrants in the great industry. The Sussex works were for the most part in country more accessible, and so had a good start, but a time arrived when all places containing iron ore found means of exploiting it. The Lingfield works may possibly have used floats upon the branch of the Eden which connected this place with the Medway system. The mills of Shere and Abinger Hammer had a good road for

pack-horses in the Pilgrim's Way hard by, joining it with Stane Street, and thence to London. The works at Thursley and Witley were on the system of the River Wey, thus linking them with the Thames.

If you will study the position of the iron-furnaces of the Weald you will notice that the South Downs form the boundary to the south. In the same way the North Downs form the boundary of the iron country to the north. At the beginning of the chalk on both sides iron ceases.

In various books on Surrey I find Crowhurst mentioned as possessing the one and only iron memorial slab in the county. This is let into the floor of the chancel, as in Wadhurst, Sussex, and is to commemorate Anne Forster, the granddaughter of Sir John Gainsford. There are several reproductions of this slab in the form of firebacks. All writers agree inasmuch as they refer to this slab as of *Sussex* iron. They do not give any authority for this, but merely state it as a fact.

I should like to challenge this reference to Sussex iron. Why not Surrey iron? Within three miles, at Lingfield, there were important ironworks. They are mentioned in a document of 1574, together with Copthorne, which is on the same branch of the River Eden. Both possessed at that time both a forge and a furnace.

Here is a very interesting note from M. C. Delany's *Historical Geography of the Wealden Iron Industry*.

"Iron in Surrey was obtained from three different deposits, namely, Hastings sand in the Lingfield area, Weald clay



THE OLD MILL BELOW HEDGECOURT LAKE





around Ewood, Cranleigh, and Dunsfold, the lower green-sand in the west at Haslemere, Dunsfold, Chiddingfold, Shere, and Abinger, and the later works at Witley and Thursley. Each of these regions represents the northern extension of a corresponding Sussex district, being East Grinstead in the first instance, Worth in the second, and Linchmere in the third. The most interesting of the Surrey works, as well as the earliest, were at Ewood to the north of Ifield. In 1553 this estate, including the woods of Leigh, Charlwood, and Newdigate, was sold by Lord Abergavenny to Christopher Darrell, the ironmaster who owned it at the time of the 1574 record, and who was exempted by special mention from the Act of Elizabeth in 1581, restricting the felling of timber. A survey of Ewood, taken shortly before the ownership of Darrell, gives a furnace, forge, and hammer, a pond of ninety acres, a coal-house, six acres of waste ground for the storing of the coal-mine, cinders and other commodities used in the works, and four cottages occupied by the workmen, as forming part of the estate, which is estimated at the annual value of £40. The foundries of Witley and Thursley heaths were the last to be established in Surrey, and also the last to remain. In 1767, a dispute having arisen between the inhabitants of Guildford and Godalming regarding the position of a turnpike on the Portsmouth road, it was stated on the one hand that there was great traffic to and from Witley and Thursley viâ Milford and Hindehead, while on the other hand it was asserted that not more than one carriage weekly conveyed material to the forge."

In making various inquiries concerning iron in Surrey I came across two very interesting pieces of information. One was the tradition that Dunsfold cast the railings for St. Paul's Cathedral, and the other that the wire nails for St. Paul's Cathedral were made at a wire mill near Lingfield. The works at Lamberhurst have always been given the credit for the railings of St. Paul's Cathedral, but no doubt so large an output of work may have been shared by different iron-masters. As to the tradition of Wire Mill, a sketch of which has been given previously (p. 91), Brown with great alacrity offered to go over and make exhaustive inquiries.

I was busy with other matters, but Brown promised to report. His reports came in fragments, mostly inexplicable telegrams. He was evidently taking immense pains about this inquiry at Wire Mill, and it was not till I remembered that a colony of lady agriculturists held sway there that the reason of his conscientiousness dawned upon me.

It was no business of mine how Brown conducted his inquiries, but as I wanted the information I wired to Brown to meet me at Lingfield.

"Awfully glad to see you," he said, as he greeted me at the station. "Ripping place, most ripping well run by some ripping girls who are growing lilies. They're awfully jolly, but they don't know anything at all about iron. I asked one girl, who was digging among the gooseberry bushes, if she had ever found any pigs, and she looked at me as if she thought I was pulling her leg. By the way, talking of legs, some of these girls look rather fetching as land girls—

I dare say if you asked her she would give you a sitting—splendid copy for *Unknown Surrey*.”

When at last I managed to get in a word I spoke to him with all the gravity I could command.

“Look here, Brown,” I said. “You seem to forget that I am a staid married man with growing-up daughters, and if you think I am interested at all in the kind of leg-wear worn by your new-found friends you are entirely mistaken. Your change from the plural to the singular in describing the charms of these lily maidens of Astalot—or is it Felbridge?—makes me fear the worst. Have you bought a chicken farm in the immediate neighbourhood or done anything else silly?”

Brown indignantly denied any such intention. He maintained that he had been making most careful inquiries on my behalf about the lost iron age, and he did not see that a little picturesque incident would injure my book. It was just like me, he said, to throw cold water on his schemes.

Just then a wild clatter of hoofs was heard, and a girl in white smock and breeches tore by on a prancing and spirited horse, and then we met milkmaids carrying pails. After a time the novelty wore off, and we accepted these delightful little farms without astonishment that they were all run by women.

I believe the land is heavy—iron again—and that farming it is no sinecure, but the experiment of this expert culture is still young, and time will show how it will develop.

The great pond known as Felbridge Water is for the

harvesting of the lilies. The sight of these, being picked and basketed by girls in a punt, is a very pleasant picture. They are sent to London and elsewhere in large quantities.

Explorers of Unknown Surrey would like to know that at the upper end of this water is a delightful lake-side tea garden, run by some members of this colony, who I believe can supply eggs and other farm produce to visitors.

We found considerable traces of iron in the colouring of the bed of the stream below the mill. The mill itself is made into flats, and there is a communal dining-room there belonging to the colony. One of the colonists, in directing us to a cottage not far from the lake, told us to keep along the "towpath." We are still wondering what is towed, unless it is the one boat used in lily-culture. I suppose the name is used as a path by the water without reference to its meaning.

I have not been able to find out much about the hero of Felbridge—the die-hard ironmaster who would not give in when the coke smelting of the Midlands had the effect of closing down the Wealden ironworks. For a time, I have read, he carried on with imported coal, and finally had to abandon the attempt. Perhaps some reader will enlighten me.

Whenever I bring out one of my Unknown County books I receive a great number of letters from people, answering questions I have asked and giving me all sorts of interesting information. Needless to say I keep them, and in future editions hope to make use of much of this material. To



answer all these letters when they come in thick and fast is often impossible, but I greatly appreciate receiving them.

Again we visited the old mill at the outfall of Hedgecourt Lake, and I made a sketch of it (facing page 142). The note on page 94, too, is taken from the pathway just above this mill.

I have already alluded to the iron slab in the church floor at Crowhurst to the memory of Anne Forster. It shows a figure in a shroud with kneeling children, shields, and an inscription in raised letters, and bears the date 1591. It would be interesting to find out where this was cast, especially as it is always referred to as Sussex iron. The probability of this well-known memorial (copied again and again in fire-backs) having been cast in this foundry or at Lingfield is very considerable. The transport of such heavy material was a considerable difficulty in days when roads were very bad indeed, and it is likely, therefore, to have been of local manufacture.

It is interesting to note that the late entrance of Surrey into the iron-smelting industry gave it certain advantages. Already alarm had been caused by the inroads of the iron-masters upon the woods and forests of Sussex. Surrey, more thinly populated than Sussex as far as her southern domains were concerned, had yet almost untouched great tracts of virgin forest from which to draw their supply of fuel.

When the boundaries between Surrey and Sussex had been decided they were probably very vague. The country



through which the "frontier" would lie was almost uninhabited, and it is most probable that the hinterland of the Sussex rapes, and the part forming their northern extremities, and the corresponding portions of Surrey forest to the south of Surrey's inhabited regions formed a sort of no man's land rich in timber and game but of no agricultural value. It is natural that the more thickly peopled rapes of Sussex would extend into this no man's land sooner than the pioneers of Surrey, and so it came about, in all probability, that much of the forest county geographically belonging to the woodland tracts of Surrey became part of Sussex.

Surrey is not so rich in firebricks and other iron castings as its neighbour Sussex, but a great number of genuine Surrey iron are to be found in cottages and farmhouses,



A STUDY IN ANGLES, THURSLEY.

not only in the furnace country, but further afield. The antique merchant, however, is on your track, if you are a collector. Nothing is so easy to forge as an iron fireback. Beware of very early examples *dated*, unless they are memorial slabs. There are a few simple souls who imagine that a date is some evidence of age. It is often as direct evidence of its modernity

as the "B.C. 52" on a Roman coin found in one of the numerous British duns known as Cæsar's camp.

Of the towns and villages of Surrey, one only preserves in its name a memory of the lost iron age, when part of the county was the northern region of the Black Country. That is Abinger Hammer, near Dorking.

The extinction of the iron industry in Surrey, as in Kent and Sussex, was the substitution of coal for charcoal in the smelting process. Iron is still to be found in abundance, but without fuel it is useless. Schemes for mining iron and sending it up to the coal regions have proved as ineffective as the



A CHIMNEY IN SHERE.

Felbridge experiment. During the war some iron experts from the north did actually visit the Wealden iron country with a view to reviving the industry if possible, but the idea came to nothing. The dells and woodland glades of Sussex, Kent, and Surrey will probably never again be part of the Black Country of England.



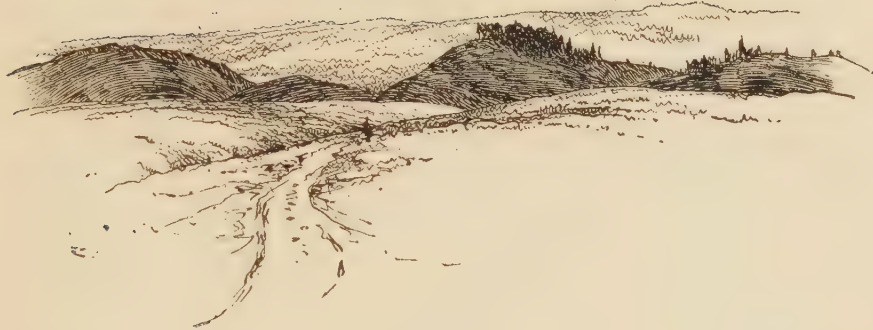
THE WHITE HART, WITLEY.

IX

A DAY WITH THE DEVIL

The devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape.

*Ham. II. 2.*



THE DEVIL'S JUMPS.

## A DAY WITH THE DEVIL

LOCAL tradition in Surrey, wrote some one—I forget now who it was—attributes everything in the way of camps and mounds to Cæsar and the works of God, concerning which they can see no geological explanation, to the agency of the Devil. If this be, indeed, true of the old-time rural topographists, it is a curious thing. Possibly the heathen rule of Thor and the Saxon deities still held such sway during the twilight of the gods that gave place to Saxon Christianity, that our forefathers were slow to learn new lessons. Instead of rendering unto Cæsar the



things that were Cæsar's and unto God the things that were God's, they rendered unto Cæsar the things that were not Cæsar's and the things that were God's unto Satan.

The Devil, if these attributions are correct, was quite an artist at his work, and, to give him his due, we owe him thanks for many a pleasing scene. However, our forefathers did not consider their places beautiful, they thought they were very ugly. The saying, oft repeated by modern writers, that the Devil has a good eye for beauty, shows a want of appreciation of the tastes of men in primitive times. These places were readily ascribed to the arch-enemy of mankind not only because of their supposed diabolical origin, but *because they were so hideous*. Life was quite unsafe enough to furnish plenty of excitement in what we should consider the hum-drum things of life. Mountain and heath land and all uncultivated places were looked upon as the least to be desired of landscape setting. In a place delightful to the poet and artist of to-day, a wild and precipitous ravine which would have made Shelley rhapsodize about "dim tracts and vast robed in the lustrous gloom of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills mingling their flames with twilight," Dante exclaims, "The place where to descend the precipice we came was rough as Alp, and on its verge such objects lay as every eye would shun," and finds it a fitting scene for the seventh circle of hell, because he considers it so unpleasant. A farmer of to-day, in spite of possibly having a very practical mind, would see beauty



THE HILLS NEAR PITCH PLACE



in the heather and bracken of Haslemere; but Cobbett speaks of it as disgusting in its hideous monotony.

To us moderns, living for the most part in dull conventionality, there is something fascinating in these waste places. They are antidotes to our respectability. We like something with a bit of the Devil in it, and so in this chapter I will endeavour to amuse you, if not to enlighten you, with glimpses of things diabolical.

I must apologize first to the vicar of Thursley for beginning this day with the Devil in his church, but the story did in fact begin there, and so I must be true to it. I am touching wood, however, by studying the remarkable timbers in the nave. They speak eloquently of what this little church must have been when it was *all* like this, a solemn aisle of great trees over-arching, an enchanted glade to enshrine the Cross, and standing in the midst of forest land.

It was a coincidence, but a happy one for this place, that it was on a Thursday that I started out on my quest.



OAK TIMBERS IN NAVE OF THURSLEY CHURCH.

Thursday is Thor's day, and Thursley likewise contains the name of the Saxon hero-god. The Devil would have been jumping to-day backwards and forwards upon the three curious hills, known now as the Devil's Jumps, had not Thor put a stop to these antics by hitting him over the head with a stone about the size of a house. This rock still crowns the top of the eastern jump, to convince you if you doubt the story. Another local reminder of Saxon mythology is Thor's Hammer, a piece of rock on the fringe of a pond near Thursley. As Thursley became a centre of the iron industry, although, like all the Surrey furnaces, it was late in the Wealden iron-age on account of the difficulties of communications, no doubt the discovery of iron and its uses were attributed to Thor.

In leaving the church at Thursley, I noticed on my left as I approached the gate of the churchyard, a headstone of 1791 in memory of one Richard Court, who departed this life at the age of sixty-five years. I presume from the rhyme underneath that he was the village blacksmith.

*"My Sledge and Hammer lie reclin'd,  
My Bellows too have lost their Wind,  
My Fire is out, and Forge decay'd,  
And in the Dust my Vice is laid."*

Another notable tombstone to the north of the church is the one erected to the memory of the unknown sailor who was murdered on the Portsmouth road just above the Devil's Punch-Bowl. This particular work of the Devil is



THE DEVIL'S PUNCH BOWL.





remembered by Gibbet Hill at Hindhead, to which we shall come this afternoon. The epitaph runs thus :

*"When pitying Eyes to see my Grave shall come,  
And with a generous Tear bedew my Tomb ;  
Here shall they read my melancholy Fate,  
With Murder and Barbarity complete.  
In perfect Health, and in the Flower of Age,  
I fell a Victim to three Ruffians' Rage ;  
On bended knees I mercy strove t' obtain,  
Their Thirst of Blood made all Entreaties vain.  
No dear Relation, or still dearer Friend,  
Weeps my hard Lot, or miserable End,  
Yet o'er my sad Remains (my Name unknown),  
A generous Public have inscrib'd this Stone."*

Turning to the left by the post-office, I found myself on a high plateau overlooking to the north a wide expanse of heath and distant ridges of pines. The fact that this sandy heathland is not easy to cultivate has given Surrey a great advantage in the matter of commons. Sussex has the South Downs, they are peculiarly her own ; but Surrey too has something singularly characteristic also in these broad belts of pine and gorse and heather. I believe if a man who knew England well were dropped from a balloon into many of these heathery regions, he would know instinctively that he was in Surrey. After about a mile, a turn to the left and the road runs through woodlands of Scotch fir, and then, to the west, rises a steep knoll, bare of trees, about four hundred feet in height. I thought at first that I had come to one of the Devil's Jumps. Looking back as I skirted it by a bridle path, I found a wild bit of

landscape, and reaching high ground somewhere near the top, I could see the hills of which I was in search, or rather two of them, for one is masked. On page 153 I have shown their appearance from this point.

Joining the road again, I passed them on my right, but found a better view from the high ground of Frensham Common. From there not only can the traveller obtain the best view of the Devil's Jumps, relieved against the rising slopes of Hindhead, but he can also see the ponds of Frensham, the great pond, a veritable lake nearly a mile long, one corner of which is in Hampshire, and the so-called "little" pond to the north-east, a beautiful sheet of water nearly as extensive, and set in a lovely setting of broad heath and belts of woodland. Old Cobbett, to whom we have just referred, matter of fact as he is about scenery that has no relation to agriculture, does begin to soliloquize about this wonderful corner of Surrey.

"At Churt, I had upon my left three hills out upon the common called the *Devil's Jumps*. The Unitarians will not believe in the Trinity, because they cannot account for it. Will they come here, to Churt, go and look at these 'Devil's Jumps,' and account to me for the placing of these three hills, in the shape of three rather squat sugar-loaves, along in a line upon this heath, or the placing of a rock-stone upon the top of one of them as big as a church tower? For my part I cannot account for the placing of these hills. That they should have been formed by mere chance is hardly to be believed. How could waters, rolling about,

have formed such hills? How could such hills have bubbled up from beneath?"

The great beauty of Hindhead has, to some extent, been its own undoing. Many red-brick houses have sprung up. Some of these would be an adornment to a city, but scarcely add to the wildness of a heath. Other architectural commonplaces have vulgarized the locality. But no amount of building can take away the feeling of exhilaration at the broad expanse of country spread out in different directions, and the high road encircling the Devil's Punch-Bowl will ever be a breezy way.

At Gibbet Hill, where the old Portsmouth road crossed the ridge, stands a cross to mark the scene of a murder. It has been moved by the Ordnance Survey, in spite of a curse on any one who "injureth or removeth this stone." As the surveyors did not move it in any spirit of forgetfulness, we hope that no evil consequences will ensue. It reads:

"ERECTED

In Detestation of a barbarous Murder  
Committed here on an unknown Sailor,  
On Sep<sup>r</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1786

By Edw<sup>d</sup> Lonegan, Michael Casey, & Jas. Marshall,  
Who were all taken the same day  
And hung in Chains near this place."

It is a strange story of murder coming out. It would seem that after their attack, when they robbed the body and hurled it down the precipitous declivity of the Devil's Punch-Bowl into the midst of thick bushes, the chances

of detection were remote. It happened, however, that some men passed along the road soon afterwards, and on looking down to the scrub below, thought they saw a dead sheep. They were horrified to find a man's dead body. A hue and cry was raised, and the murderers, who had travelled on into Hampshire, were taken in the act of attempting to sell the dead man's effects. The creaking gibbet, with its two skeletons, must have been a fearsome place to pass at night.



X

THE LAKE DISTRICT OF SURREY



In every landscape the point of astonishment is the meeting of the sky and the earth, and that is seen from the first hillock as well as from the top of the Alleghanies.—EMERSON.



FRENSHAM GREAT POND,

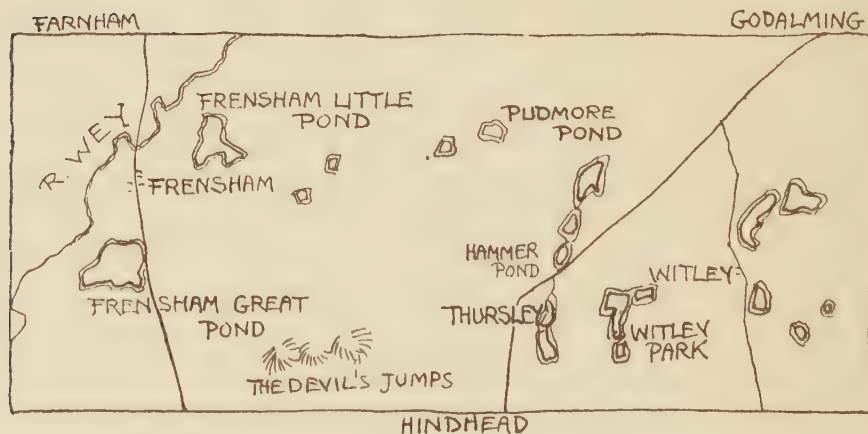
## THE LAKE DISTRICT OF SURREY

I DO not know much about geology. I have tried to study it, but, either through my own invincible ignorance, or in consequence of the occultism that has obscured the science, have never succeeded in learning much. Like the yokel who was immensely impressed by the parson's learning, inasmuch as he could not understand a word of his discourse, I am likewise overpowered with admiration for those who can remember the (seemingly) ridiculous nomenclature of geological formations. Post Pliocene and Lower Eocene always seemed to me to be the

names of antediluvian animals, and the Upper and Lower Cretaceous formations would do splendidly to describe some species of land-crabs.

Nothing daunted by these initial terrors, I plunged further into the subject, and found that Greensand was so-called to throw dust in the eyes of the unwary, who might be simple enough to suppose that it was sand, or that it was green. As a matter of fact, it is a yellow rock. At last I got stuck on the Wealden Anticlinal, and gave it up.

I disclose this ignorance of mine upon the subject of geology as an excuse for the title of this chapter, "The Lake District of Surrey." I am told that it is absurd to call ponds lakes. But if geologists can call yellow rock green sand, then why on earth cannot I describe the great sheets of water





THE LITTLE POND AT FRENSHAM

at Frensham as lakes? As you will see from my sketches, they have all the spirit of lakes. If you were shown these impressions without any comment, you would take them for drawings of lake-land scenery. The proximity of such picturesque mountain background as that formed by the Devil's Jumps and the long slope of Hindhead is strangely reminiscent of Cumberland. It is the Lake District in miniature. The Little Pond at Frensham is particularly wild, and is the haunt of water-fowl and shy birds not readily to be seen so near main roads. The Great Pond has been much painted by artists. As I write I can see a lady artist at work.

*Lector* : Why do lady artists dress badly ?

*Pictor* : I won't attempt to answer your question until you have established the fact that they do.

*Lector* : You know they do. Remember the two girls we saw painting at Hindhead.

*Pictor* : I don't agree that they help your case at all.

One was obviously not a lady, and the other was still more obviously not an artist.

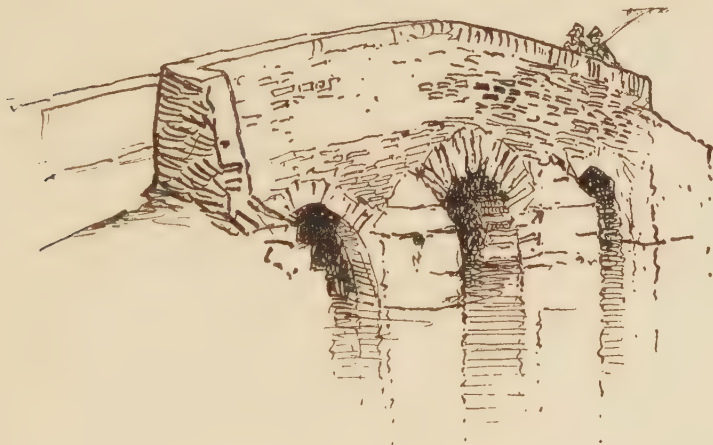
*Lector* : Very ingenious. Well, I will put the question differently. Why do female artists dress badly ?

*Pictor* : They don't. There is no law against well-meaning girls buying a paint-box and going out into the woods to sit on a camp-stool, but that does not make them artists. Take those women artists who have attained any success worthy of the name and you will find that they do not look very different from other women. The dishevelled female with the Byron collar is generally indicative of the fifth-rateness.

The village of Frensham is a very small place, but it makes up for its modest size by having one of the largest copper cauldrons in existence. All sorts of wild and improbable stories have at different times been believed about it. John Aubrey writes about "an extraordinary great kettle," supposed by the villagers to have been brought thither by the fairies.

"To this place, if any one went to borrow a yoke of oxen, money, etc., he might have it for a year or longer, so he kept his word to return it. There is a cave where some have fancied to hear music. On this Borough hill (in the tithing of Cherte, in the Parish of Frensham) is a great stone lying along, of the length of about six feet ; they went to this stone, and knocked at it, and declared that they would borrow, and when they would repay, and a Voice would answer when they should come, and that they

should find what they desired to borrow at that stone. The caldron with the trivet was borrowed here after the manner aforesaid, but not returned according to promise; and though the caldron was afterwards carried to the stone, it could not be received, and ever since that time no borrowing there. . . . The people saw a great fire one night



SOMERSET BRIDGE, ELSTEAD.

(not long since), the next day they went to see if any heath was burnt there, but found nothing."

The geological reasons for this Lake District of Surrey are not easy to determine, but that a great profusion of large ponds exists in this part of Surrey is strikingly clear if you look at a map. There are two large sheets of water



north of Witley, one on either side of the railway. Evidently there is good fishing on the big one, for it is often possible to see punts and boats upon it, each with its enthusiastic disciples of Izaak Walton.

Between these ponds and Frensham are several other large sheets of water, three in Witley Park, a whole chain of them lie east of Thursley, and there is Pudmore Pond on Ockley Common.

There is only one way to see this delightful Lake District of the south, and that is on foot. For the most part the fringes of these ponds afford only rough and intermittent paths, but they are well worth the chances of patient exploration.

I remember once walking from Farnham in the dark and arriving at the shores of Frensham Great Pond at dawn. The sun began to lighten the sky in the direction of Hindhead and the Devil's Jumps, and soon a subdued but golden glory broke through the blue veils of mist and cloud that hung about the hills. Reflected in the still waters and etching the reedy margin of the lake a pageant of morning was emblazoned in pillared light upon the sky. I have seldom seen such colour, and you must take my sketch as a symbol only of the glory. It is to the original what a rough woodcut is to a flower.

To stand upon the high ground of Surrey overlooking Frensham Great Pond is to view one of the loveliest scenes in all England. Towards Hindhead are the wild and rugged hillocks known as the Devil's Jumps. Towards Frensham



SUNRISE OVER FRENTHAM GREAT POND



Little Pond is as free and untrammelled a bit of heather-covered moorland as you could wish to see, stretching to the horizon and studded with groups of pines. At your feet lies such a lake as might be nestling in the Alban Hills or hidden in the fastnesses of the north—yet it is all within forty miles of Waterloo Station.

Farnham is the best station for this region, and the mention of Farnham again conjures up Cobbett and his *Rural Rides*. I know many people cannot stand Cobbett because of his violent prejudices, but I can read him with greatest enjoyment when I differ most from his opinions. And, after all, so much that he advocated in the way of political reform, although considered ultra-radical in his day, would be quite conservative now. Who would go back to the systems of the “rotten” boroughs? Not the most reactionary Tories.

I was talking to a man the other day about travel in Surrey and asked him what he thought of *Rural Rides*.

“Can’t stand them,” he said. “I dislike Cobbett immensely.”

“But do you not think, however much you disagree with his way of putting things, that he was often right?”

“He was nearly always right,” he replied. “*That is why I can’t stand him!*”

I see, however, that Mr. J. S. Ogilvy, in his interesting work, *A Pilgrimage in Surrey*, sums up the result of Cobbett’s life-work very differently. Thus he writes:

“To the class for whom he originally wrote, even in his native town, he is only a name. What he struggled for, the

reforms which he desired, have become vague and misty things. . . . And really, for all his work—except the literary portion of it—there is not much to show ; it is doubtful if the labouring man is any better off. His *Cottage Economy* finds no place in the cottage of to-day ; his introduction of maize had no effect ; his loudly proclaimed discovery of the virtues of the acacia (named *locust* in his works)—which had been tried in England long before his time—has not caused any revolution in forestry ; his efforts to revive the long-established industry of straw-plaiting have been in vain so far as the southern counties are concerned ; his objection to the use of potatoes as human food are as chaff before the wind.”



XI

THE GHOST ROADS OF SURREY



Roads are many ; authentic finger-posts are few.—CARLYLE.



JM

RIPLEY.

## THE GHOST ROADS OF SURREY

HAVE you ever seen a ghost road, a road which is dead, but yet persisting in its personality? I can show you four in Surrey if you have not. Two are Roman. A third is a forgotten section of the old highway from Godalming to Chichester. The fourth is a ghostly canal, grass-grown or flower-strewn, having little forests of alder or ponds of lilies half hidden between its winding banks.

Stane Street, the Roman way between London and Chichester, is for the greater part still in use, but between Dorking and Ockley there is a lost section, and south of

Ockley another piece of intermittent track, now field, now forest, till it crosses the Sussex boundary at Roman Woods near Rudgewick. From this point also branches another Roman way, stretching up in a north-westerly direction to the left of Ewhurst by Farley Heath, where was a Romano-British Station, to Guildford.

This ghost of a road, if you can find the right place upon it, and choose the right night, is a highway of dreams. You can hear the steady tramp of legions, and the dark background of the blue ridge above flashes time and again with the glint of starlight flashing from helmets, while the shadows of the woods are full of eyes. These dread movements, as of a fearsome machine not to be resisted, are watched by the tribes of the once impenetrable Weald.

Or in grass-grown Stane Street, where it loses itself in tangled undergrowth, where nothing passes for a week but the rabbit or stoat, you can hear strange rattlings at night, and ghostly shoutings as a chariot once more awakens the echoes of Leith Hill. It is the post to Rome.

*Lector*: Steady on! I don't mind a little of this imaginary business. It is all very well to reconstruct Stane Street, but this post to Rome is a bit too thick. Why not a Cook's tour?

*Pictor*: There *was* a post to Rome. I don't mean "box cleared for Roman mail at 7.30 p.m.," or anything like that, but a service for important dispatches was maintained. I will tell you what I know about it, which, as a matter of fact, is not very much.



THE GHOST OF STANE STREET.

N



One day I was travelling by a train in which I met an elderly man, who was a student of the Roman occupation of Britain. We discussed various topics, when I happened to say something about the length of time it takes to get a letter from London to Rome. I believe the time is two days. He then made the startling statement that it would only have taken *three days* in the third century. This was, of course, under ideal conditions, with favourable weather in the Channel. A system of relays of galloping chariots travelling day and night, he maintained, carried mails to Rome from outlying parts of the empire. I give you this for what it is worth, and am not responsible for the statement, but if you will work it out, the distance between London and Rome by road (exclusive of the Channel) is about 1000 miles, you will see that it is just possible. Chichester was one of the Roman posts for communication with the continent, so my highly imaginary galloping chariot may not be so absurd after all.

A friend is experimenting with a map, and he makes it, roughly, that the journey would have to be done at the average rate of about fourteen miles an hour over all. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this estimate, but it seems to bring my travelling companion's statement within the region of possibility. Of course Brown suggests *doing* it as a sort of holiday, even to crossing the Channel in a galley, and putting the statement to some sort of proof. This, without prejudice of the general absurdity and impracticability of the attempt, raises the question of the comparative excellence of roads



in these times and in the time of the Cæsars. Roman roads would probably be quite good going, assuming that everything was cleared out of the way, for they were metalled thoroughly only for the width of a chariot and a little to spare—say five feet.

Brown pleaded hard for the advisability of his scheme. He maintained that it would make a splendid journalistic experience to adorn the pages of the *Graphic*. "To Rome by Chariot" would not be at all commonplace. I pointed out the enormous expense of horses, to say nothing of policing the course and the difficulty of finding chariots. This led Brown to compromise. He said, after all, milk-carts would do. A milk-cart is designed on the lines of a Roman chariot. Besides, it might be made a financial success by getting some Swiss-milk firm to subsidize the venture as an advertisement, especially as we should pass through Switzerland!

I have done some exceedingly uncomfortable things during my wanderings with a sketch-book, but I do not think galloping to Rome in a milk-cart would be a very happy addition to them or one likely to be very romantic, even in retrospect, and so Brown's holiday scheme remains unfulfilled.

Stane Street starts from London and runs through Kennington and Clapham, Balham and Tooting. The long, straight sections of road are very noticeable. They are ten times wider than in Roman times. The aristocratic origin of this way cannot be hidden even by buses and clanging trams. It is, even here, a ghost road, for it has changed again and again. As a coach road and the fashionable way to Epsom



A BYROAD OF STANE STREET.





A DISAPPEARING BIT OF RURAL TOOTING.

it has seen many smart equipages. In the Windmill Inn, on Clapham Common, there is a fine old print, showing the life of the road a hundred years ago when Clapham was a country village.

I have a very strong interest in Clapham in general and in the Manor House of the Old Town in particular, because I was born there. Pulled down some twenty years ago to make way for mean streets this landmark of bygone South London is now only a memory, but a very vivid one.

It does not seem long ago, although it is some thirty years, when Clapham Common was a wild land. It seemed a long way across to the south side, and a journey to Balham, now

done in about two minutes by tram, was looked upon as an adventurous outing.

Clapham stands high, and it is still a matter of controversy in my family as to whether it is—on a still night with a north-east wind—within sound of Bow Bells. If so, as well as being a Scot, a Man of Kent, and a Man of Surrey, I may lay claim also to being a Cockney.



A PASTORAL OF GREATER LONDON: HAYMAKING IN TOOTING.





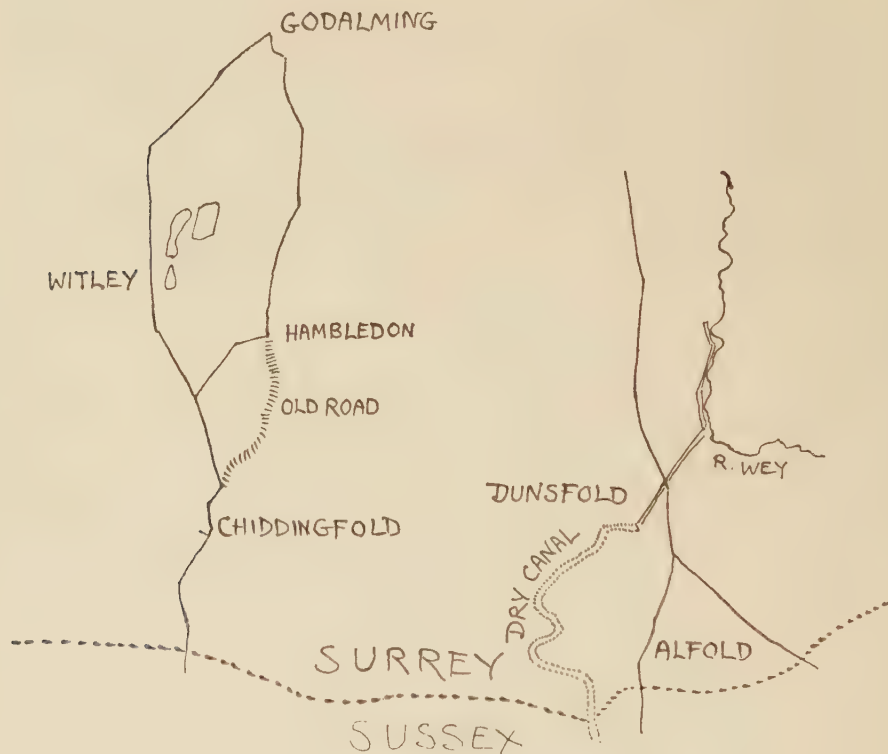
PARK HILL HOUSE, TOOTING.

The two sketches of Tooting made here appeared in *Country Life* (Sept. 8, 1923), and it is by the kind permission of the editor of that paper that I am quoting part of an article by Mr. Gordon S. Maxwell dealing with this subject of rural haunts near London.

“One of the few remaining links with rural London—the London of field and hedgerow, I mean, not just an isolated building or small piece of land—is now being filed away by the relentless hands of the roadmaker and builder. The name of Tooting Broadway, London, S.W.17, does not conjure up in the mind of the average man anything countrified ; rather it speaks of clanging trams along a crowded shop-lined street flanked by road after road of small houses ; yet these pictures were sketched last week on fields actually



abutting on Tooting Broadway, just over six miles from the heart of the largest city in the world. Park Hill, Tooting, which is now being cut up for building, is one of the last



OLD WAYS IN SURREY.

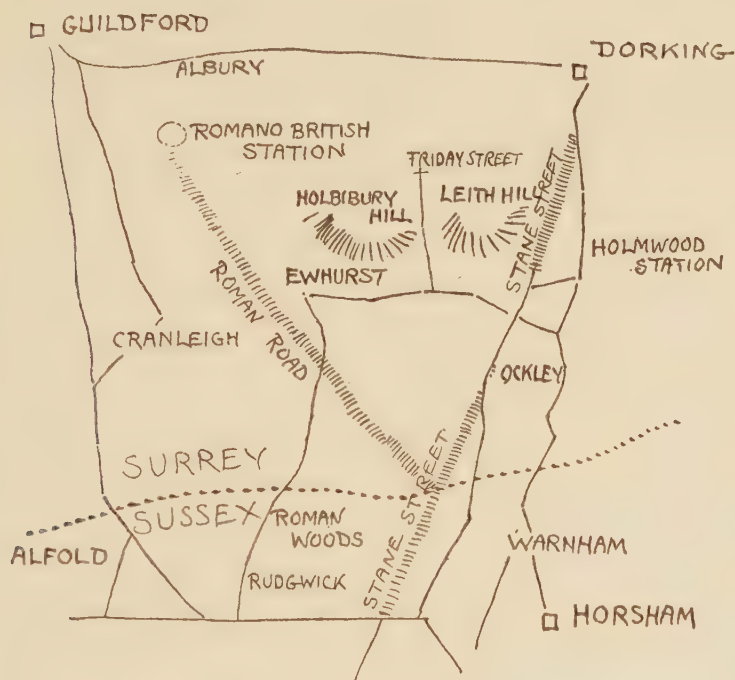
estates of any size so near London to disappear. Any one walking in the grounds up to a few months ago might have been in rural Warwickshire, for all the signs of town life



STANE STREET NEAR LEITH HILL



that were to be seen or heard ; for, although this estate lies on a main L.C.C. tram route, it was possible to get far enough away in its ninety broad acres so that the noise of the trams



ROMAN ROADS IN SURREY.

ceased altogether, and the only sounds were the voices of the birds and the lowing of the cows at milking time : a peaceful scene of the old English countryside—at Tooting. It is

interesting to note in passing that in Theodore Hook's novel, *Maxwell*, there is a man who wishes to study agricultural conditions at first hand, and to do so determines to get into the heart of the country, away from all influence of London. The place he chose was Tooting. This book was written in 1830, but thirty-two years before the present Park Hill was built, and when our grandfathers were boys. The old farm on the estate was quite likely one of the places the author had in mind, and the fields can have altered but little since those days till the commencement of the demolition some months back. The house was practically rebuilt in 1862, on the site of an older building, only one wing of which remains, by a Mr. Bell, who is said to have made a fortune over corn dealings with the Government during the Crimean War. It may be called a comfortable rather than a beautiful structure, in the style beloved of our mid-Victorian forefathers. Time has mellowed it somewhat, however, and with its sunk brick wall separating the garden from the meadows and its belt of fine trees, it forms a very happy picture of a family country house. The original old house and its story form one of the few local legends of which this part of Tooting can boast. (It is at the end of the town away from the common.) It has a rather romantic history, and I was told stories of its doings in the 'good old days,' when it was the resort of highwaymen, who used it not only for shelter for themselves on account of its isolated position, but also as a hiding-place for much of their ill-gotten gains before they could be disposed of. That there is some truth in this story has lately been



A FARMHOUSE NEAR OCKLEY.

proved, for quite recently the workmen engaged on road-making unearthed some old silverware, which must have been buried a good hundred years or more. This they took to the local pawnbroker's and did a successful deal, till the owner of the place, hearing of it, laid claim to this highwaymen's treasure-trove and recovered it. On the same estate, nearer the main road, in fact almost on it, stood Park House, an older building still, now pulled down, which was the original house of all, but since the building of the mansion relegated to the position of dower-house."

It was on the occasion of exploring rural Tooting to make these sketches, and when we returned by tram to the City, that we found ourselves in conversation with an old man, a workman of some sort, who told us many interesting things concerning this highway in the days when he was a boy.



Among the statements that he made was this, that he could remember barges unloading near the Swan at Stockwell. Now, if you know that part of the Clapham Road, you will probably look upon this as rather a tall story. However, on reflection, his memory may quite easily have been right. The little River Effra, that once ran through Brixton and which now is a ghost stream, runs, such as is left of it, under the Effra Road. It used to flow out through Stockwell, and, skirting the Oval, fall into the Thames at Lambeth (derived from Lamb Hithe) not far from the present Vauxhall Bridge.

Now, these Thames creeks were tidal, and through fed by quite small streams must have been navigable to barges at high water for some distance. Picture the region by the Swan, Stockwell, devoid of the buildings all around, in fact just fields and waste land, and it is not difficult to imagine barges unloading within sight of the roadway.

The most famous Roman road that concerns Surrey is Stane Street, or Erming Street—names which seem to be interchangeable in certain parts.

This road ran from Chichester to London, and entered Surrey at Rowhook. In *Bygone Surrey* it is thus described: "Stane Street enters the county of Surrey near Rowhook (which appears to have been a meeting or crossing of several ways), and proceeding very straight through Ockley to the Holmwood, near Dorking, it turns there under Ainstybury Camp, towards Dorking, and runs through that town to Burford Bridge, which would also, as will be seen later, appear to have been an important place of meeting and crossing of

roads, and the old well-known inn may have sheltered both Romans of old and pilgrims in mediæval times, as it does now all sorts and conditions of men."

Another writer says: "Near Ockley the road was called 'Stone Street Causeway,' and Camden speaks of it as 'the old military road of the Romans called Stone Street.' It was 'some 30 feet broad and some 4 or 5 feet thick of stones.'

"Considerable vestiges of this Roman road may even now be traced on the Ordnance Survey; approaching London, it passed through Epsom, Ewell, Merton, Tooting, and Clapham. Here, then, we have a great Roman road through Surrey from Chichester—the Erming Street—or the Stone Street."

One writer at the close of the eighteenth century, when the fear of a Napoleonic invasion was a real one, speaks of the Roman roads in Surrey, and remarks on the neglect into which they have fallen, but far from regretting this he *welcomes this state of things*, for he quaintly adds: "It is so great a consolation, however, that by the badness of our roads no enemy with heavy ordnance or baggage could advance upon London from Portsmouth or Dover without getting sadly bemired and brought to a dead stop to our great content."

The Watling Street that ran from London to Canterbury and on to Dover has not very much of it in Surrey. It passed through St. George's Fields (by the site of Bedlem, close to the Elephant and Castle), on past Southwark Church and up Kent Street (now Great Dover Street). It skirted Bermondsey

and Rotherhithe and passed out of Surrey about Deptford, where Kent begins.

It is interesting to note how casual the county boundaries were, and in *Bygone Surrey* we read :

“the boundary between Surrey and Kent was at one time so uncertain that in the seventeenth century there was a solemn inquiry by the judges to decide whether Hatcham was in Surrey or Kent ; and it was decided to be in Surrey.”

There was another Roman road that branched off from the main one at Kennington and passed through Brixton, Streatham, Norbury, Croydon, Coulsdon, and probably ending at Shoreham, though the traces of this road the farther it gets from London appear to be harder to find. Still another ran through Godstone—branching off from this at Purley—and finally left Surrey at New Chapel, near Lingfield.

“All roads lead to Rome”—a general saying nowadays—had a real significance in Roman days, when every Roman soldier's thoughts were so often with “The Eternal City,” as are our own colonists with London to-day. This thought, combined with the great veneration the Romans had for roads and road-making, at which they were so skilful, has been finely expressed by H. Leng Jones in his little book, *Songs of a Buried City*. In this poem the author describes finding of a Roman tombstone by the side of Watling Street, and imagines the scene at the death of the Roman soldier,



THE HIGH STREET, GUILDFORD



Marcus Petronius, whose name is carved on it. The dying soldier, taking his last farewell of a comrade, says :

“ Bury me by the Road—the Road that leads  
 Out from the gateway yonder, skirts the Hill,  
 And then bears ever east and south, until  
 It meets the sea at Dubrisport—  
 And ends ? No, no—not ends ; for, in a sort,  
 It leaps the strait, and on the other side,  
 Like a strong runner with unwearied stride,  
 By hill and dale, by forest, moor, and down,  
 O’er rushing stream, past fortress, hamlet, town,  
 Runs ever onward, onward ever, till at length  
 There rises into view, in all her strength  
 The City Rome, my Rome. . . .  
 Good night, Pherecrates—good night ! Thou’lt keep  
 Thy promise, comrade ? Close beside the Road—  
 Beside—the Road.”

By Merton are still some old estates. I can remember, before the speculative builder and encroaching London had done their work and turned most of them into dreary streets, when all this region was a delightful place of walled gardens and ordered fields by the Wandle. There is a certain type of large and level enclosed garden, especially kitchen garden, bounded by mellowed red brick over which processions of tall poplars are seen, which I can only associate with the Thames Valley, although it exists elsewhere in other flat lands. I have shown one on page 195, as especially characteristic.

*Lector.* I believe I have seen something very like it in an advertisement of wire-netting.

*Pictor.* My dear Lector, what a detective you would make !



You have spotted it. It *was* made for an advertisement of wire-netting. However, as it is so very true to the Thames Valley, it was the best thing I could find, and, after all, the wire-netting rather improves the picture. It helps to display the feeling of a sunny open country. I will take you into my confidence and tell you a harrowing story of one of my failures in "commercial art."

An enterprising and adventure-loving advertising agent for a firm of wire-netting manufacturers conceived the idea of booming wire-netting from a new point of view—to show its various uses, in pictures of a breezy and sunny character, showing wire-netting, not with the mechanical exactness of a blue print, but in its open-air setting—so that any prejudice the prospective buyer might have against it as fencing, etc., would be taken away. This agent, being a man of great intelligence, hired me for the job!

I got away with one line sketch, which was duly produced, and proceeded with this one. Then the directors saw it and the new drawing was submitted to a board meeting. Now all artists hate board meetings. Things are going quite well, when one of their wretched conspiracies throws everything out of gear. A number of old gentlemen go out to lunch, do themselves very well, and then in a spirit of almost ludicrous seriousness begin to air their views on drawing and on art generally. "The left leg of that rabbit is all wrong"; "Who ever saw cabbages like *that*?" "Why not use a photograph, and then people could see *exactly* what it was like," etc., etc.



OLD HOUSES IN GUILDFORD





RONALD MAXWELL

A SURREY GARDEN  
BY THE THAMES.



And so my wire-netting was condemned. There was too much garden and not enough wire-netting. There should be *more* wire-netting. They confidently looked forward to a time when the whole world would be one vast wilderness of wire-netting and that of *their* brand to the exclusion of all rivals.

You will be pleased to hear that I made the old boys pay for the drawing, though they did not use it. I had serious thoughts of sending it to the R.A. as a "problem" picture—could the rabbits get over the fence or not?—but thought better of it. And that is the secret history of how this drawing of a Thames Valley kitchen garden came into this book.

There are many tracks and ways in Surrey, like the deep sand cutting through the woods by Friday Street already alluded to, which I have not included here as ghost roads because I am ignorant of their history, and it is this linking up of an ancient way with history that makes it a ghost road. I have been on a few false trails and raised no spirits.

The most exciting, most uncomfortable, and most interesting of my studies of these ghost roads was made, as many other explorations had been made, under the leadership of Brown. Cranleigh was the place of the meet. The season was winter and the weather was bad.

Why we should start so precipitously and at night to find a waterway that was tangled and overgrown in a dense wood, and in such a case that it could not possibly escape us even



if we waited till the morning, I do not know. But Brown aroused so much enthusiasm, and wrapped such a halo of mystery and romance about the subject, that we were quite ready to follow him. He told us of some secret glass factories in the depths of Sidney Wood, run by Frenchmen (I do not know the date). Why it had to be secret is not clear, unless the making of glass was a monopoly somewhere else. Also Brown told us of a man he had met who told him of some ghostly gates in the wood. They were of enormous height and in a wood of birch trees.

These probably were old lock gates, but as no water remained, and as forty years of growth could produce considerable trees, the canal-like nature of the glade was not apparent.

Providing ourselves with food, torches, lamps, and all the paraphernalia suitable for the exploration of Darkest Africa, we set out at about eight o'clock, taking the road to Alfold. Within a mile of Cranleigh we came to a portion of the canal—a derelict section, much overgrown, but still containing a little water.

Scylla and Charybdis were armed with acetylene lamps, and these were sufficient to light our path, but when we entered into the dark places of the wood, we were, according to Brown's plan, to proceed with torches.

Nothing of very great moment happened until we reached Alfold, when we took a road that gradually became a lane, and then a rough track, and then a mud bath. The general discomfort of the procession was accentuated by the fact

that rain had set in, a steady downpour that did not look like abating.

According to Brown we were on the right road, but I do not believe he really knew exactly where we were. On the right loomed a big farmhouse, and a furious dog, not unlike the Hound of the Baskervilles, made frantic attempts to break his chain. In consequence of the general disturbance he brought out the inmates of the house.

It was now ten o'clock, and we must have seemed a curious crowd. Eve looked like a thermos-flask merchant, for she had much tea and hot drinks hung round about her in strings and straps.

Brown was embracing a bundle of torches and looked as if he was carrying a baby.

Captain X. and I were endeavouring to decipher a map by the aid of intermittent gleam from Scylla and Charybdis, who were dancing about like attendant spirits trying to concentrate as much light as possible upon the sodden Ordnance Survey.

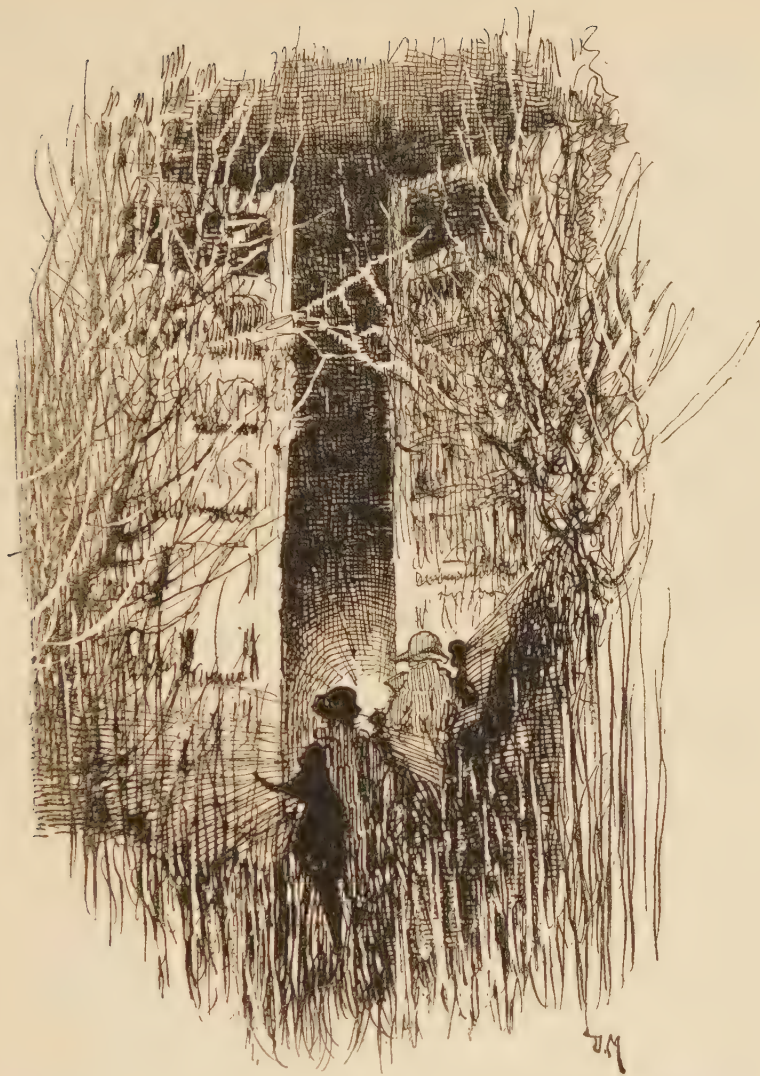
We managed to impress upon these good people that our attempts to find the lost canal were poor but honest. In fact, we made such an impression of respectability that we were asked inside to warm ourselves or rest. We were so wet, however, that we decided to carry on and get it over. Thanking our would-be-hospitable friends, who were convinced that we were doing something for the "pictures," we struck out again toward Sidney Wood. The path turned to the right by the farm and then bearing to the left again

brought us to a gate, a cottage, and the entrance to the wood. A few hundred yards, and we were hopelessly lost.

There were great numbers of small tracks and footpaths, and at every intersection of our main track we held conferences to debate the best route. Unfortunately, with all the preparations Brown had made, he had neglected to provide himself with a compass. In such weather there was no help from the sky, and we simply did not know our bearings.

Scylla, with all the wisdom of a Girl Guide, told us how to tell the direction of the prevailing wind by the growth of the trees. There were two disadvantages, however, to making the theory very enlightening. In the first place we did not know which *was* the prevailing wind, and the second difficulty was that the trees in this wood seemed to grow in every direction without any system whatsoever. If there is anything in this prevailing wind theory, then the prevailing wind in this part of the country must have been a series of eddies.

At last, by the merest guesswork, we found a path leading slightly uphill. It did not seem likely that a canal would ever have existed on rising ground, but sure enough we crossed a dark and overgrown trench which looked suspiciously like the lost canal. After a few alarms and excursions, different reports shouted from the more adventurous explorers ahead told us that we were on the right track. It was difficult, however, to believe that this could ever have been a waterway for the passage of barges.



"SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS HAD  
DISCOVERED THE GHOST GATES."





The fact that there was no water, and the fact that trees of considerable size were growing in it, were not the only difficulties in recognition of its nature. There did not seem to be enough depth to make a good waterway, though it must be supposed that forty or fifty years of undergrowth had added several feet to the floor of the old canal, and it is likely, too, that a certain amount of wear and tear may have lowered its banks in places.

By this time Brown had served out torches, and we made a lurid scene as we marched along the banks of the canal. There was a good path in such a position that it must once have been the towpath, not overgrown as was the canal, and our progress was rapid.

We were travelling in what must have been a northerly and north-westerly direction, and after about a mile we crossed a road and then plunged into the wood again. A small house lay snug among the trees, but we saw no light and apparently no one saw us. Probably it was a summer cottage and there was nobody in it.

Captain X. and Brown led the way, while Scylla and Charybdis made adventurous excursions to the right or left, as openings were seen.

There were rushes and a few pools of water at certain places, and then the wood became so dense and black that we were often afraid of straying away from the old towpath.

We halted for a short rest, and it looked as if these ghostly gates had perished or been taken away. A ration of tea and



biscuits brought us back to greater optimism and we decided to push on.

While we were still partaking of our midnight refreshment we heard shouts from the direction of the acetylene lamps. Scylla and Charybdis had found the ghost gates. They were close at hand, and we had not seen them on account of the density of bushes and trees on the bank. The children, however, had climbed through and walked along the bed of the canal, suddenly seeing them looming out above them, presenting a very weird sight as they stood half open ready to receive a ghostly barge. The lock within was black, and out of the crumbling brickwork of the lock's sides grew one tree—a birch—quite a foot thick. The whole area was shrouded in woodland growth, thorn and bracken and silver birch, and looked in our lamplight and torchlight sight of it as weird a subject as anything conjured up by a dream.

Thus ended our quest of the lost canal. In spite of the soaking we had endured and the fatigue of very rough travelling we felt quite pleased with ourselves for achieving such an interesting discovery.

We retraced our steps and came again to the place where we had first struck this derelict canal. Our torches had all been used up and we were depending principally on the spasmodic efforts of Scylla and Charybdis for illumination. It seemed darker than ever, and we feared losing ourselves as before in the depths of the woods. We had neglected to blaze our trail, and in the dark it was difficult to follow our footsteps.

Brown, however, suggested keeping to the canal and travelling by that until we came out again into civilization, and it did not seem a bad idea.

After what seemed many miles, we came out into the open



AN OLD LOCK IN THE WOOD.

by a road. Brown said we were at Loxwood. This proved true. We were no longer in Unknown Surrey but in Sussex, and so our quest of the ghost roads of Surrey was ended.

The fact that we have arrived on page 206 reminds me, also, that this book must be ended. The most difficult thing in writing of impromptu rambles of this sort is to know when to stop. As these notes have no plan whatever, but have been compiled quite casually and as my sketch-book dictated, I must end as I have begun, without any other reason than the fact that I have no more room, although I have still plenty of story to tell. So good-bye for the present to my book-friends who have borne with my vagaries and kept with me through the ups and downs of Surrey. I shall hope to meet you all again in Essex before Christmas. You think Essex is not so interesting. Well, wait and see !

THE END.

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